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SWIFTWING, THE SQUAW;

OR

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AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING DIME NOVELS:

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SWIFTWING, THE SQUAW.

CHAPTER I.

DRIVEN FORTH.

A SMALL train, on its way to Santa Fe by an unusual route, had paused near the headwaters of Red River, before beginning the terrible journey across the Staked Plain.

The proprietor of the train was Robert Harwell, generally called Captain Harwell, a big, burly, robust, hard-featured man of fifty odd winters. In his younger days he had been a trapper and trader among the Indians, but had finally settled down in the Taos valley, in New Mexico, where he had married a Mexican woman, had built a distillery, and had worked and traded until he found himself a rich man.

His Mexican wife had died, leaving him one daughter, whom he had sent to the "States" to be educated, and who was now returning with him to his home in New Mexico. Ida Harwell was a beautiful brunette of eighteen, and her father, who looked up to her and stood somewhat in awe of her, regarded her as a treasure beyond price.

There were but a few wagons in the train, and Captain Harwell's force was a small one. Besides himself and the teamsters, it consisted of four white men and two Delaware Indians.

It was a noon halt. The men, mostly with their pipes in their mouths, were grouped about the wagons, watching a little drama that was being acted among them.

Near one of the wagons stood Captain Harwell, his countenance redder and harsher than usual, and his right hand raised, as if to give emphasis to what he was saying. His rifle was leaning against a wagon-wheel.

A few steps from him stood his daughter, Ida, pale and silent, her head bent down, and her eyes drooping.

Before them, at a little distance, was a young man, tall, sinewy, and straight as an arrow, with hazel eyes, chestnut hair, and sun-browned complexion. He was dressed in the garb of a trapper, and was leaning on his rifle, with his hands folded over the muzzle.

"I told you, Harry Lee," said Captain Harwell, "that if I caught you foolin' around my girl ag'in, you'd have to quit camp. The time has come, and you must go. Have you got any thin' to say ag'inst it?"

The young man made no reply, but gazed wistfully at Ida.

"Of course you hain't got a word to say ag'inst it. I gave you fair warnin', and it's all fa'r and squar'. Here's the money that's comin' to you. I've rolled it up in a bit of paper; but it's exact, and you kin count it if you want to."

Harwell stepped forward, and handed a small package to Harry Lee, who took it, as if not noticing what he was doing, unrolled it, let the coin fall upon the ground, dropped the paper upon the pile, and still gazed wistfully at Ida.

"I wish to say—" began that young lady, raising her head a little.

"Hold yer tongue, girl! Thar's been too much of your talk a'ready."

"If I knew what objection you have to me," remarked the young man, "perhaps—"

"That's enough. I don't want to hear another word. Least said soonest mended. The quicker you're off, now, the better for all consarned. Your money's thar, and you can take it or leave it, and I defy any man to say that I hain't treated you jest right."

The old man glared around upon the party, to see if he could catch any signs of dissent; but nothing was to be learned from the stolid countenances of the trappers, and the opinion of the teamsters was not considered.

Harry Lee mounted, and turned his horse's head toward the north.

"Farewell, Harry!" exclaimed Ida. "You carry my heart with you, and I care not if all the world knows it."

The young man looked back, with a glad light in his eyes, and then went off at a gallop.

Captain Harwell turned angrily toward his daughter, but smothered his wrath, and said nothing.

Just then his attention was drawn off by another occurrence.

A young Delaware, tall and erect, with high forehead, piercing eyes and commanding appearance, a splendid specimen of the original forest Indian, stepped forward, leading his horse, and carrying his rifle in his hand.

"What's up now?" inquired the old man. "You seem to be bound for somewhar'."

"Harry gone—Nen-ne-pah go too," replied the Delaware.

"Not if I know it. I hired you to make this trip, John Hawk, and you've got to do it."

"Harry hired to make this trip—you sent him away. John Hawk hired to make theis trip. Nen-ne-pah send *him* away. You keep John Hawk—Nen-ne-pah go with Harry."

Having exhausted the subject, the Delaware turned away.

"You had better come back," said Captain Harwell, with an oath, as he brought his rifle to his shoulder, and leveled it at the Indian.

The Delaware turned and faced him, and a tall trapper, named Will Markhead, long renowned as a guide and Indian fighter, stepped before the rifle.

"This won't begin to do, Cap'n Harwell," said the latter. "You've got no call to shoot John Hawk."

"Better git out of my way, Markhead, or I mought drop the charge into *you*."

"Reckin ye won't do that, Cap. The reds hev drilled this old karkidge of mine nigh as full of holes as a meal sieve, and bullets hev quit skeerin' me."

"Leave me alone, and I won't trouble *you*. If that Delawar' tries to run off, I mean to bore a hole through him."

"Reckin ye're riled jest now, Cap, and ye'd better put away that shootin'-iron ontill ye git kinder cooled down. Fact is, the Delaware is right. Ef you had a right to turn off Harry Lee, John Hawk has a right to turn hisse'f off. You hired us all fur the trip, and ef you kin break the barg'in, we kin break it. What's fa'r ~~far~~ one side is fa'r fur t'other. Ain't that about the right thing, boys?"

There was a general murmur of assent, from trappers and teamsters.

"This yere looks like a rebellion," said Captain Harwell, setting down his rifle, and looking around upon the group.

"That's what it ain't, Cap. We mean to stick by you; but we wan't to go in fur the fa'r thing. Nobody said a word ag'inst your right to turn off Harry Lee, and we must uphold the Delawar's right to turn hisse'f off."

"Do you know, Markhead, that we are mighty shorthanded, and that we are comin' into the Comanch' country?"

"I know that well enough, Cap. I am sorry the young chap was sent away, and I am sorry the Delawar' means to foller him; but you made the law, and you must stand to it. Ef you should shoot John Hawk, it wouldn't help us any."

"That's a fact. As you are all ag'inst me, I must give in."

Captain Harwell offered John Hawk an increase of wages, to induce him to remain; but the Delaware mounted his horse, and rode away, without noticing the offer. In a short time he joined Harry Lee, who had brought his horse to a walk, and was moving slowly across the prairie.

Those who were left with the train then hitched up and saddled up, intending to move on and get a better camping place for the night.

When all was ready, Markhead mounted his horse, and ascended a little knoll, from which he had a good view of the plain for miles in every direction.

He saw Harry Lee and the Delaware slowly riding toward the point where the river issues from the bluffs, and then, after a few minutes, he saw something else.

"Comanch'!" he shouted. "Comanch', and a crowd of 'em!"

The whole party ran to the knoll, and looked in the direction pointed out by the trapper. Lee and the Delaware were still visible, and there was also visible a dark cloud of horsemen, coming swiftly from the west. Soon the two men were surrounded and enveloped by the cloud, and were seen no more.

"They've gone under," said Markhead, speaking sadly enough.

Ida Harwell, who had hastened to the knoll with the rest, turned upon her father a cold and reproachful look, and walked back to the wagons without uttering a word.

The others remained on the knoll, and watched the cloud of savages, which had settled where they struck their victims. Two riderless horses were seen, which were pursued and overtaken by the Comanches, and then the cloud moved slowly toward the west.

"What a set of durned fools we are!" exclaimed Markhead, as an expression of intense disgust pervaded his countenance. "Hyar we've been, like a lot of punkin-headed greenies, standin' out in plain sight of a big crowd of Comanch', jest to let 'em know whar we are, and to give 'em our trail."

Captain Harwell shook his head mournfully, and said nothing. He began to doubt whether he had acted for the best.

"It'll be our turn next," resumed Markhead, "and I'm 'feard that we won't be a mouthful fur that grist of reds. Like the wolves, when they've tasted blood, they'll want more. Pity they've rubbed out two as good men as ever toted a rifle."

The wagons were started, and the train slowly pursued its way toward the bluffs.

CHAPTER II.

SWIFTWING.

"WHAT does this mean, Hawk?" asked Harry Lee, as the Delaware rode up and joined him. "Have they driven you out, too?"

"John Hawk no more. John Hawk was white man's hunter—Nen-ne-pah is a free warrior."

"Very well, my friend; I will call you any name that you wish to go by; but you don't tell me why you are here."

"Where Harry goes, Nen-ne-pah will go. Nen-ne-pah is a warrior. His fathers were the Lenni Lenape. He can not forsake a friend."

"I will be very glad to have your company; but the train will be in a bad plight. They were shorthanded enough, and now they have lost two men who know how to use their rifles. I am afraid that some roving band of Comanches, seeing how weak they are, may pounce upon them."

"Old Cap'n Har'dhead must look out for hisse'f," replied the Delaware, shaking his head.

"Somebody will be in trouble before long, or I am much mistaken. Look yonder, Hawk! What are those?"

"Comanche," said the Delaware, after a single glance westward.

"Plenty of them, too. What shall we do now? Run for it?"

"Run where?"

"Anywhere, to get out of their way."

"To the north?—river there. To the east?—river there. Will Harry go back to the train?"

Harry knew that his companion was right. In front of them was the river, flowing between bluffs near a thousand feet high. At the right the river made a bend, nearly shutting them off in that direction. It might have been possible to escape around the bend; but another party of Indians happened to be approaching them from that direction. Behind them was the train, which had not left its noon camp; but Harry Lee had no thought of falling back on Captain Harwell.

"Any thing but the train," he said. "We can fight them, Hawk, and give a good account of ourselves."

"Maybe so we won't fight—we get away."

"I would like to know how you propose to do it."

"Get down, and let hoss go."

"Do you mean that? Well, I can fight better on foot than on horseback."

Both dismounted, and turned their horses loose. The Delaware led the way to a gully, which had once been the bed of a small tributary of the river. The gully deepened as they went, and was quite precipitous in places; but they scrambled down rapidly, until it ended at the south bluff of the river. Here they found themselves some two hundred feet below the level of the plain, and perhaps six hundred above the bed of the river.

"I don't see that we are any better off," said Harry. "The Comanches will follow us, and we have no chance to escape."

"Nen-ne-pah has been here before," replied the Delaware, as he took hold of a point of rock in the bluff, slipped his

leg around at the end of the gully, as if stepping around a corner, and disappeared from Harry's sight.

Harry Lee essayed to follow his friend's example. He perceived that his right foot readily found an opening in the bluff, and he tried to slip around the corner as the Delaware had done. It was a ticklish business, to explore unknown recesses, while hanging so high up on the face of a bluff but he drew a long breath, swung himself around, and found himself in a grotto that had been worn out by the action of the water on the sandstone and gypsum of which the bluff was composed.

It was a beautiful grotto, the sides being quite smooth, and the strata through which it was cut showing varied and beautiful colors. A small spring bubbled up within it, and the water was of an ice-cold temperature, but the Delaware forbade his companion to drink it. In fact, the water was such that it would create thirst, instead of quenching it. The grotto, as has been said, was in the face of the bluff, just at the side of the gully down which the fugitives had come.

"It is very plain that you have been here before," said Harry. "Are you sure that the Comanches know nothing of the place?"

"Reckon they don't. Mighty hard to find, and Comanches never climb about much."

"If they should find it, one man could keep out a thousand of them. But they may shut us up here, and starve us to death, as there is no way of getting out."

"Maybe so some way to get out. Let Harry wait."

The Delaware filled and lighted his pipe, and Harry, not to be outdone in coolness and self-possession, followed his example.

Soon they heard the yells of the Comanches as they came clattering down the gully, and then their exclamation of wonder and anger, when they reached the mouth, and found no trace of the fugitives. Harry and the Delaware smoked their pipes in silence and security, until the Indians returned to the plains, and before long the galloping of their horses could be heard, as they went back to the westward.

This danger over, Harry Lee looked out of the grotto, to examine the wonderful gorge upon which it spread. The gorge

was narrow, with stupendous cliffs of sandstone, streaked with gypsum, towering to an immense height, and inclining toward each other as they rose. Above him the cliff overhung the grotto, and below it sloped inward, reaching hundreds of feet down to the river that brawled and tumbled over its rocky bed. The cliffs had been worn, by the action of the elements during ages, into such fantastic forms, that it required but little effort of the imagination to people that solitude with weird and monstrous denizens.

Harry suffered his fancy to work its will among these wonders of nature, until the sight and sound of human life suddenly put an end to his reverie.

Far below, among the rocks that bordered the opposite base of the cliff, an Indian woman was picking her way down the gorge, now dipping her bare feet in the stream, and again stepping with sure tread over the damp stones that obstructed her path. She was so far from Harry, and in the shadow of the cliff, that he could not clearly distinguish her features; but her form was so perfect, her bearing was so erect, and every movement was so exquisitely graceful, that he knew she must be beautiful, a very princess of her race. On her head she carried a large gourd of water, which she held with one hand, while the other hung at her side.

Harry uttered a slight exclamation as this apparition came in view, and called the attention of his companion to it.

As the Delaware looked down into the gorge, there came a great change over him. The stolidity of the Indian at once disappeared, and in its place was a joyful, eager and excited look, of which Harry had not believed his friend's countenance capable. With eyes wide open and gleaming with a strange fire, he seemed to drink in the vision, gazing down into the gorge as if spell-bound.

"Do you know her?" asked Harry, wondering at his friend's excitement.

"It is Swiftwing," whispered the Delaware, as if he were pronouncing a sacred name.

"And who is Swiftwing?"

"She is a Delaware; but she has no people. She comes and goes as the wind does, and no one can say where is her lodge or whither she has gone."

“ You have seen her before, Hawk. Do you love her ? ”

“ Nen-ne-pah speaks the white man's language very much bad. He can't tell how beautiful is Swiftwing. He can't tell how much he loves her, except to herself, in the language of his own people. He spoke to her of his love many moons ago ; but she did not even look at him.”

“ How comes it that she is alone in the world, with no home and no friends ? ”

The Delaware told Harry her story, so strange and fanciful that it seemed to the latter more like a legend of the past than a narrative of the present. It was in substance as follows :

The father of Swiftwing was the son of Wingenund, and Wingenund was the last sachem of the Delawares. He was the son of many Wingenunds, who had been sachems through many generations. When the Delawares were driven from their last resting place east of the Mississippi, Wingenund had accompanied his people across the great river, hoping that the remnant might increase, and that a powerful nation might be built up in the new land.

In this hope he was doomed to disappointment. His son, who was to have succeeded him as sachem, was killed in an affray with the Comanches, and the remaining Delawares scattered themselves over the plains, cultivating the soil, or seeking employment among the white men as trappers, hunters and guides. As a people the Lenni Lenape were extinct. They were no longer warriors, except when they fought, as hirelings, for the superior race.

The loss of his son, with the ruin and degradation of his people, so preyed upon the mind of the old sachem, that he shunned all society, and withdrew into the wilds, taking with him his granddaughter, the only relative left to him. The place of his retreat was unknown, and no one could say whether he was alive or dead. Swiftwing, however, had made her appearance, on various errands, among the Delawares and the whites. She was always silent and reserved, easily repelling all attempts at familiarity, seldom answering any questions, and especially avoiding all allusion to Wingenund and his whereabouts. The young Delawares had attempted to follow her, to trace her home ; but all their efforts had been unsuccessful, and some had resulted in disaster.

Harry's companion compared her to the wind, which went whither it pleased, and no eye could trace its course.

"Nen-ne-pah has sought her at Ke-che-a-qui-ho-no before now," said the Delaware; "but, much hunt, little find. Maybe so I now find Wingenund."

"The sachem must be a very old man now," remarked Harry.

The Delaware could not find words to express how old Wingenund was, but gave his friend to understand that the sachem was very old indeed.

"If there is any way of getting out of this place, let us go," said Harry. "I am both hungry and thirsty, and I would like to help you trace Swiftwing to her hiding-place."

The Delaware took his rifle, and went to the back of the grotto, where the cliff was honeycombed with irregular openings, leading in all directions. He took one that led downward, and through which trickled the water of the little spring, and followed its windings. At places it was so small as hardly to allow them passage; at others it made such abrupt descents, that they were obliged to climb down, laboriously and carefully; but it still led them downward, and they finally reached the mouth of the opening, at the base of the cliff, close upon the roaring little river.

CHAPTER III.

THE HIDDEN LODGE.

"It will be a blind trail; but I think we can follow her," said Harry Lee, when he had emerged from the opening at the foot of the cliff.

But the Delaware would hear of nothing of the kind. She must not be followed, and those who should attempt to follow her would gain nothing by it. He had himself had some experience of the danger of attempting to track her to her home, and he told such a marvelous tale of his adventures on that quest, that the credulity of his companion was taxed quite severely.

According to his account, he had been led astray by specters, his path had been mysteriously blocked up, the ghosts of gigantic red-men had rolled down rocks by which he had nearly been crushed, he had been entangled in snares and pitfalls, had been shut up in impassable ravines, and had barely escaped from the gorge with his life.

"How are we to find Swiftwing unless we follow her?" asked Harry, who was doubtful whether his friend was not trying to impose upon him.

"Maybe so we see Swiftwing again sometime. Then Nenne-pah will speak to her."

Hardly had the Delaware spoken, when the girl came in sight, walking slowly up the rocky bed of the stream, with the empty gourd in her hand. It needed but a glance to tell Harry Lee that she was wonderfully beautiful, in spite of her dark complexion. Her features were regular, and perfect in their style. Her eyes were black, brilliant and piercing; her bearing was erect and dignified, as if she felt that she had been born a princess; the expression of her fine countenance was intelligent and commanding, none the less attractive for a shade of melancholy. Her dress was such as a princess of her people might have worn, in the days when the Lenni Lenape were a great nation. The only article of the white man's handiwork visible about her was a bit of ribbon, with which her abundant black hair was gathered at her neck, and thence fell below her waist in waving, ebon masses. A long hunting-knife, without a sheath, was stuck in her girdle; but this could not be called a portion of her dress. On her head was a circlet of copper, in which were fixed a few dyed feathers.

Harry did not wonder that the Delaware's eyes brightened as he looked at her, that his cheeks glowed, and that he fairly trembled with emotion.

Both men drew back into the shadow of the rock, where they could see the girl without being seen by her.

"Don't you mean to speak to her?" asked Harry, when she had come nearly opposite to where they stood.

"Hist! Look there!"

Harry, who had been watching the Indian girl, turned his eyes up the gorge, and saw a large brown bear, slowly pick-

ing his way among the rocks, on the same side of the stream with the girl. He had already noticed the tracks of the animals, but had not suspected that one was so near. He seized his rifle; but the Delaware motioned to him to lay it aside.

The girl, whose eyes were on her rocky path, did not notice the animal until both were nearly opposite the two men. Then the bear raised his head, saw her, growled, and halted. The girl looked up, saw the bear, and also stopped. She looked around, as if undecided what to do, and then turned to retrace her steps. The bear followed pretty rapidly. Hearing his quick footfalls, Swiftwing turned and faced him again. The bear was now getting angry, and was evidently meditating whether he should allow this slight creature, that walked the earth on two feet, to obstruct the passage of him, a big animal that boasted four feet.

With the timidity habitual to his kind, he hesitated to begin the attack; but growled savagely. The girl drew her knife from her girdle, and still faced him, with a slight shade of uneasiness in her countenance, but no fear. This proceeding increased the anger of the bear, and he raised himself on his hind-feet, growling more fiercely than before. Swiftwing seemed to know that she would make her situation worse by attempting to escape, and she braced herself for a deadly struggle.

The odds were too great—and Harry Lee thought that a stop ought to be put to the game; but he waited on the motions of his friend, who, he felt sure, would not suffer the girl to come to harm.

As the bear rose upon his hind-feet, the Delaware brought his rifle to his shoulder with amazing quickness, and fired. The ball struck the animal just behind the fore-shoulder, and he fell.

Mortally wounded, though not dead, and mad with rage, he staggered to his feet, and rushed at the girl, the only enemy he saw. Then Harry Lee's rifle cracked, and the bear again fell, with a ball through his shoulder. The Delaware, dashing across the stream, reached him almost as soon as Harry's bullet struck him, and drove his knife again and again into the struggling animal.

In a few moments the bear was dead, and Swiftwing stood and looked at her deliverers, who were then both before her. Her look expressed considerable astonishment, some gratification, and not a little uneasiness.

The Delaware washed his knife, returned it to his belt, and stood up and faced her, his eyes flashing and his cheeks glowing.

"Has the daughter of Wingenund forgotten Nen-ne-pah?" he asked, in the language of his own people.

"Nen-ne-pah is not forgotten," replied the girl. "He is welcome."

Welcome! The eyes of the hunter flashed brighter than before, and a deeper red glowed in his cheeks.

"Nen-ne-pah is welcome," repeated Swiftwing, as she extended her hand. "The white stranger is also welcome. If they will go with me to the lodge of Wingenund, they shall be fed."

Both gladly accepted the invitation, and the Delaware ventured to ask whether the sachem still lived.

"Wingenund still lives," replied the girl; "but the Great Spirit has called him, and he is on his way to the happy hunting grounds. Nen-ne-pah and the white stranger may see him if they wish to. The eyes which can not look at the sun when it is high in the heaven may gaze upon it as they please as it sets."

She requested them to wait until she could fill her gourd, saying that Wingenund would drink no water but that from the head of the river.

Harry Lee and the Delaware took advantage of her absence to skin the bear, and cut off some choice pieces of the meat, which they tied up in the hide, and slung it upon a pole, to be carried between them.

Swiftwing soon returned, and led the way down the gorge, followed by the two men with their burthen. When they had gone about a quarter of a mile from the scene of the adventure with the bear, she turned aside into one of the deep defiles with which the gorge abounded. It was so narrow that they were obliged to walk in single file, and it was with difficulty that the men, with the pole and its load of meat, managed to follow their guide.

About half-way up the defile she halted, and rolled away a stone that partly concealed an opening in the rock. Here she entered, motioning to her companions to follow.

As Harry Lee looked around the rocky apartment in which he found himself, he was struck with wonder—first, because it was so light, although there was no visible entrance by which light could enter. He was next astonished at the sides of the cavern, formed of strata of three colors, green and pink and white, so regularly and harmoniously arranged, and so smoothly cut by the action of the water ages ago, that the effect was wondrously beautiful. The room was large, irregular in shape, and seemed to extend a considerable distance along the defile; but one end was cut off by a heavy curtain of skins. Rude benches and bundles of furs were scattered about, and at one side was a mass of dressed deerskins, porcupine quills, feathers, beads, and an assortment of bone needles and sinews for sewing.

The men seated themselves, and laid down their load of meat. Swiftwing put away her gourd of water, and signed to them to come with her. As she lifted the curtain of skins, they followed.

On a scanty couch of furs lay an old man, long-bodied, lean and withered. His scalp-lock, the only hair that was suffered to grow upon his head, was as white as snow. His whole appearance denoted such extreme old age, that Harry Lee began to think that he might credit some of the marvelous tales that had been told him by Nen-ne-pah.

A high fever was on the old man; but he turned his head as the intruders entered, and glared at them with the look of a dying old lion that has been surprised in his den. The girl spoke a few words to him in the Indian tongue, and he faltered out a welcome in the same language. Most of this was understood by Harry, who used a dialect that was common to many tribes, by the use of which, and by familiar gestures he was generally able to converse quite freely.

Nen-ne-pah knelt reverently by the side of the old man, and spoke to him in tones of the deepest awe, as if he were some Indian saint or holy recluse, whose shrine, long sought for, had been at last discovered.

Wingenund raised himself on his couch, and poured forth

a strain of feverish eloquence, descanting on the former glories of his race, which he had hoped to revive in that land beyond the great river, on the great nation which he had hoped to establish, gathering together the scattered remnants of his people, away from the withering influence of the white men, and on the sad and complete disappointment of his hopes, which had driven him to seek seclusion in those wilds, where he might die in peace, his last moments unimbittered by the sight of the dispersion and degradation of the children of great warriors.

But there were some, he said, who had not been willing to become drudges for the white men, who lived as their fathers had lived, who kept alive the old customs and the old traditions, and who, though some of them might be growing old, were warriors and true sons of the Lenni Lenape. One of those there might be, who would take up the task which his feeble hands had been unable to complete.

Harry left him talking, with the young Delaware listening reverently, and followed Swiftwing, who had slipped out through the curtain of skins.

When he found her, and saw where she was seated, he was no longer surprised at the fact that the cavern was lighted from without; but his astonishment was great at the means by which the light was permitted to enter. At the side was a large piece of plate glass—or what seemed like plate glass—some three feet by two in size, set firmly in the solid rock. It gave an excellent out-look upon the defile, the medium being so transparent that its presence could hardly be detected, except by a close examination.

When Harry Lee asked the girl how she had procured such a window, she answered that she had picked it up on the plain, and had herself fitted it to a natural opening in the rock. This did not lessen his surprise, and he further inquired for what purpose she had put it there.

“To give light to the lodge,” she replied. “If any people should chance to pass, I can see them plainly.”

“But they can see you just as plainly, and the lodge may be discovered.”

She shook her head laughingly. As Harry's astonishment increased, she told him to step outside and look in at the win-

dow. He did so, and was obliged to confess that he could not even have found the window, if he had not known its exact location. As for looking through it into the lodge, that was out of the question. In fact, it could not be distinguished from the masses of gypsum that were scattered about in the face of the rock.

He returned into the cavern, carefully replacing the stone at the entrance, and closely examined the window. He came to the conclusion that the seeming plate glass was a large piece of pure selenite, a mineral which is transparent to those within a house, while those without are unable to look through it.

Having settled this matter in his mind, he seated himself at the window, near Swiftwing, feeling that he was in perfect security.

In a few moments the girl, whose position enabled her to look down the defile, uttered an exclamation, started up, and disappeared through the curtain of skins. Harry Lee took her place, and looked down the defile, to learn what had caused her alarm.

CHAPTER IV.

COMANCHES AT WORK.

WHILE Harry Lee was gazing down the defile, Swiftwing quickly returned with Nen-ne-pah, who also looked eagerly out of the window.

A band of Comanches, painted and armed for the war-path, in single file, moved slowly past the window. Those within could see them so plainly, that it seemed as if they could almost reach out their hands and touch them. The countenance of the Delaware hunter was a study. It was impossible for him, with such a sight before him, to maintain his stolidity of demeanor, and his varied feelings were plainly expressed by the unusual play of his features. He grasped his tomahawk, and loosened his knife in his belt, as if determined to sell his life dearly if the Comanches should break

And yet, though he saw them so plainly, and though several of them seemed, as they passed, to be looking directly in at the window, it was certain that they observed nothing unusual in the cliff.

Swiftwing was excited, if not frightened, and Harry Lee, who was acquainted with the strange property of the selenite, could not repress a feeling of uneasiness as he looked out upon his enemies.

When half the band had passed, there was a revelation that startled Harry Lee, turning his face pale, and then fiery red.

In the middle of the band walked Ida Harwell, her hands bound, her face pale, her body bowed down by grief and terror.

Harry acted as if his senses had deserted him. He seized his rifle, sprung forward, and would have called her name at the top of his voice, if he had not been seized by Nen-ne-pah, who covered his friend's mouth with his hand.

The young man soon became calm, although his frame shook as if he had been seized by an ague. He perceived that his rash action had come near destroying his friends, as well as himself, and he silently watched the remainder of the band as they filed past the window.

He counted fifty-eight Comanches. When the last man had gone by, he looked inquiringly at Nen-ne-pah, as if relying upon him for counsel.

"Wait a little," said the Delaware.

Swiftwing, as if understanding the scene, said nothing; but her countenance expressed her sympathy.

It was now nearly night, and it was necessary that what was to be done should be done quickly.

After waiting nearly half an hour, the Delaware beckoned to his friend, and led the way out into the defile. Here he explained to Harry that it was his intention to follow the trail of the Comanches, to learn whither they had carried their prisoner.

Before starting they looked back, and saw a man coming up the defile. He was quite close to them when they perceived him, and both at once recognized him. It was Will Markhead, and he was evidently following the trail of the

Comanches. As he had seen them, they could not well avoid meeting him, if they had wished to do so, and they waited until he came up to them.

His surprise at the meeting was greater than theirs, and he grasped the hands of both, greeting them cordially.

"We thought the Comanches had got you, sure," he said. "We saw them hoverin' around you like a flock of buzzards, and then they swooped down onto the place whar you war, and that was the last we saw of *you*! How on earth did you git out of that scrape?"

"We just dropped out," replied Harry. "We sunk into the ground, and they missed us. But there is no time to tell the story now. You see that we are safe, and that is enough. What has happened to the train? How is it that Ida Harwell was taken by the Comanches?"

"Hev' you seen her. How many red-skins war thar'?" Which way did they go?"

"We have seen her. We counted fifty-eight Comanches. They passed here a little while ago."

"How did you see them? I don't see any chance to ketch a sight of 'em in this place, without runnin' foul of 'em."

"Never mind that now. We will follow the trail directly. I wish you would answer my question."

"Wal, boy, it seemed that bad luck overtuck the old man arter he driv' you off. We started direckly arter you had been rubbed out, as we thought; but we hadn't gone fur when two of the wagons broke down at once, and we had to stop to fix 'em. While we war busy with that job, a crowd of Comanches pounced down onto us—the same crowd, I reckon, that got arter you. They war on us afore we could git ready to meet 'em, and I tell you, boy, they went through us like a norther. We fit as well as we could; but the reds helt the best hand, and we would hev been totally rubbed out, ef a lot of Uncle Sam's blue-coats hadn't come in sight and skeered off the Comanches. We lost more'n half our men, and the Comanches kerried off the gal. I told the old man, afore we started, that we didn't hev enough fightin' men; but he was allus sech a hard-headed old beaver that he would never look at a float stick until his foot was katched in a trap."

"What are you doing here alone? Where is Captain Harwell?"

"He sent on the train and the teamsters with the sogers, and tuck the rest of us to hunt the reds. Of all the tearin' down mad old bull bufflers I ever see, the old man was the wust. He cussed the Comanches, and cussed hisself, and cussed everybody and every thin'. I don't know what he allows to do when he comes up with the reds; but he's mad enough and crazy enough to pitch into 'em single-handed."

"Where is he now?"

"Down thar' by the river, with the rest. I thought I saw a trail though thar' ain't much to be seen on these rocks, and I come up to foller it."

"You had better go and bring them here. The Indians are certainly up'yonder."

Markhead went back to the river, and soon returned with Captain Harwell, one of the white men, and one of the Delawares, all of the hunters that had been left alive and unwounded by the Comanches.

It was easy to see that Captain Harwell was in a terrible rage, though his anger, by this time, had cooled down into a settled hate of the Comanches and a desire to take vengeance upon them. He greeted Harry Lee quite coolly, asked no questions, and directed Markhead to lead the way up the defile. Markhead advanced, and the others followed him.

At the distance of a quarter of a mile the defile came to an end—that is, the cliffs on each side, which had been gradually approaching each other, joined at the top as if they had grown together, leaving a narrow passage below. Further on this passage diminished in height, until it was but little more than high enough to allow a man to walk under it.

Markhead stepped up to the passage, suddenly drew back and approached it more cautiously, taking care to keep himself concealed. He then beckoned to his companions, who went and looked in, one by one.

They saw a large open space, nearly circular in shape, and some fifty feet in diameter. A few bushes were there, with considerable rack grass, and a clear spring bubbling up opposite the passage. This space was walled in by cliffs, one hundred feet high and upwards, perpendicular or nearly so.

It was now quite dark in the defile, the gibbous moon sending but few of her rays down into those abysses ; but the Comanches had built a fire, and there was light enough to see them sitting or lying down at their ease. Near the spring Ida Harwell was seated, with her hands still bound, and her head bowed down as if by grief.

Captain Harwell was so enraged at this sight, that he panted, foamed at the mouth, and clutched his rifle with a savage oath. The utmost efforts of his companions were needed to quiet him, and to prevent him from dashing through the passage into the midst of the savages. He was forced away, and all moved further down the defile, and stopped to hold a consultation.

"Why have the Indians gone in there?" asked Harry Lee.

"They war afeard the sogers would git arter 'em, I reckon," replied Markhead, "and they went in to hide. How many of 'em did you say thar' war?"

"I counted fifty-eight."

"I ain't good at figgers. How many is that to each of us?"

"They are nearly ten to one."

"Purty durned hard odds. They're in a mighty nice trap, ef we could only keep 'em thar. But the gal is in the trap too."

"The odds are too great for us to fight them, and there is danger that they might kill Miss Ida, if they should be pressed too hard. I hardly know what to so say about it."

"Suppose we speak to Swiftwing," suggested Nen-ne-pah.

"Perhaps she might think that we are too many to enter her lodge."

"Maybe so. Nen-ne-pah will ask her."

The young Delaware went down to the cavern, and returned with the tidings that Swiftwing would welcome himself and his friends. All then made their way into the hidden lodge, and not one of the new comers could refrain from expressing his surprise at the cavern and its arrangements. The Delaware who had come with Captain Harwell went in with Nen-ne-pah to offer his devotions at the shrine of old Wingenund, and Harry Lee explained to Swiftwing the situation of Ida Harwell and the position of the Comanches.

"Wait till morning," said the girl, after she had pondered the subject a few moments.

Harry proposed to go up to the head of the defile, and to remain there during the night, for the purpose of watching the Comanches; but she persuaded him not to do so, assuring him that the Comanches would certainly not stir from where they were until the next day.

She passed through the curtain of skins, and was alone a while with Wingenund. When she came out there was a joyful light in her eyes, and she soon left the lodge.

Markhead conversed with Harry and Buck Welch, the remaining white hunter, concerning the attack upon the train, the Comanches, and the plans and chances for the rescue of Ida, until he laid down and dropped asleep, and the others did the same, the example of sleeping having already been set by the two Delawares.

Captain Harwell was silent and gloomy. He had no suggestions to offer, and scarcely answered when he was spoken to, but sat like a picture of concentrated wrath and deep desire for revenge. When he laid down, it was long before slumber closed his eyelids, and when he slept his sleep was light and troubled, filled with tossings, moanings, mutterings and strange oaths.

As for Harry Lee, he was hardly better off than the old man. He excited and vexed his brain with devising all manner of schemes for the rescue of Ida, until his brain refused to be vexed any longer, and slumber ensued. Then his dreams were full of Ida and the Comanches.

CHAPTER V.

THE COMANCHES TRAPPED.

ALL the men in the cavern, except old Wingenund, were aroused by Swiftwing, before it was daylight in the defile, though signs of dawn were to be seen in the sky above. She told them to go and look for their enemies, to see whether they had escaped.

Nen-ne-pah, who saw more in her countenance than her words expressed, hastened to lead the way up the defile, and Swiftwing followed the men.

When they reached the head of the defile, they stopped and stared in astonishment. The passage through which they had looked the previous evening was entirely blocked up by heavy bowlders and masses of stone, which were so jammed into the opening that they could not be removed from within. A great pile of stones was thrown up against those that blocked the entrance, and the Comanches were effectually shut up in their hiding-place.

It was some time before the astonishment of the men found vent in words. Who, in the name of wonder, had done this work? No one supposed that the slender fingers of Swiftwing had accomplished it; those heavy stones must have been lifted by stout hands and brawny arms.

Swiftwing stood and looked at them all, as if enjoying their surprise.

"Whose work is this, girl?" asked Captain Harwell, turning upon her, and giving expression to the question that was in the eyes of all. "You must know something about it. If you do, I hope you will tell us."

"Does not the Manitou still live?" she replied. "Wingenund is a great sachem, and the Manitou has not forgotten him."

Captain Harwell grunted his disapproval of this evasive answer.

Nen-ne-pah looked at Harry, as if to ask whether he still doubted his friend's marvelous account of his adventures in search of Swiftwing and Wingenund.

Harry Lee looked upon the girl's reply as an attempt to keep up and exalt the mysterious character of her old grandfather; but this did not lessen his wonder at the work that had been so magically wrought.

"Whoever did it, it's done," said Markhead; "and it's done well. The gal has had suthin' to do with it, you may bet, whether sperrets or humans hev been about. You may bet, too, that she ain't gwine to tell how 'twas done. I know suthin' of her, and of old Wingenund, too. They kin beat the nation at keepin' close. Whoever did it, and however

'twas done, it's a durned good job. The Comanches are corked up in thar', and they kain't git out onless we choose to let 'em."

"If the girl won't tell us how this was done," said Captain Harwell, "I reckon she can tell us why it was done. To starve out the Comanches—is that the notion?"

Swiftwing nodded her head.

"It'll be a long job, I'm thinkin'. I know fur sartin that the niggers have got meat enough to last 'em a long time."

"And water?" she asked.

"Water? Yes, plenty of it. I saw a mighty fine spring in there."

"The more they drink of that water, the more they will thirst."

This was a fact, as Harry knew when Swiftwing mentioned it, although he had not before thought of it. They were in the gypsum region, where the water, highly charged with the salts of that mineral, was unpalatable and unwholesome, increasing thirst instead of allaying it. Captain Harwell also knew this, as he had tasted the water in the gorge below. The bad quality of the gypsum water accounted for the fact that Swiftwing had gone toward the head of the river to bring water for Wingenund.

"That's all very well," said the old man; "but thar's two sides to the question. If the reds starve for water, my girl will starve too."

"Don't be onreasonable, Cap'n," suggested Markhead. "They've got a little water, no doubt, and you know well that they, durned snakes as they are, will give it to the gal as long as it lasts, and the chances are that they won't tech drop themselves."

"It may be so; but she isn't used to bein' starved fur any thin', and those critters can go days without food or drink."

"They won't do it, though, when they kin help it. It ain't likely that they will stand it long, when they see that we only want the gal, and that we are willin' to let 'em off with thar lives."

"I hope you are right; but I have my doubts about it."

"Any how, it's the best we kin do to try this maneuver. Ef thar's any other thing to be done, this child kain't guess what it is. The cusses are stirrin', and hyar's what wants to git up thar' and see what they think about it."

Markham at once commenced to ascend the cliff, and was followed by Harry Lee and Nen-ne-pah. They did not find it very difficult to clamber up at that place, although they were incumbered with their rifles, and they soon reached the top, where they found themselves on the level plain.

Looking down, they saw the Comanches in great commotion. Some were near the closed entrance, vainly endeavoring to remove the stones with which it was blocked up; others were looking about in bewilderment; others were talking and gesticulating in the most excited manner. Ida Harwell was awake, and was seated near the spring, as she had been when her friends saw her the previous evening.

It was not yet fairly light upon the plain, and down in the hollow it was still so dark that the faces of the Comanches could hardly be distinguished from above, and the watchers could not be certain of what they were doing, or how they were affected by their imprisonment. They waited until the sun rose, keeping themselves concealed, seeing what they could see, and listening to the various noises that came up from below.

When the light had penetrated the hollow, they saw a warrior go to the spring, kneel down, and imbibe a long draught of the water. It was ice-cold, no doubt, and its coldness made it pleasant to him; but in a few moments he appreciated its bitter, unpalatable, nauseating character, and a decided change came over his countenance. He shook his head, made a wry face, and spoke to some of his companions, pointing at the spring. Others tasted, and made wry faces, and then there was a general gabble among them concerning the water.

By this time Captain Harwell had climbed the cliff, and was looking at the proceedings below.

As the news of the bad water spread among the Comanches, they renewed their efforts to remove the stones from the entrance to their prison, but were obliged, after a long trial, to abandon the attempt as fruitless. Then they looked

up and around upon the cliffs that walled them in, seeking a way to escape, but finding none.

"Now's our time to talk treaty to 'em," said Markhead "You know thar lingo, John Hawk, and you must do the jabber. Speak to 'em, and tell 'em that we've got 'em in a trap. Tell 'em that we kin pick off every red scamp of 'em, and make wolf's meat of the hull band but we don't want to kill 'em—we only want 'em to give up the white girl to us. Tell 'em—though they know it well enough—that the more they drink of that water the thu'stier they'll git, and they kain't stand it long. Tell 'em that all we want is the gal, and we will let 'em out of thar' as soon as they give her up."

As no amendments were proposed to this message, the Delaware stood up and hailed the Comanches. All looked up instantly, and a dozen rifles were at once pointed at him. He dodged down behind a rock, and told them below to lower their guns, as he wanted to have a talk with them.

They obeyed, and he proceeded to deliver his message, garnishing it with such exaggerations and figures of speech as he thought would have the best effect upon his hearers.

When Nen-ne-pah's speech had been heard and "inwardly digested," and when the Comanches had conferred together concerning it, one of the warriors, who was probably a chief, replied to it at some length. He commenced by hurling at the Delaware the name of dog, and such other opprobrious epithets as happened to strike his fancy, and emphasized his remarks by gestures, some of which were pointed at Ida Harwell.

The substance of his speech, as translated by Nen-ne-pah, was as follows:

The Comanches were not afraid of the white men and the red dogs who followed them to pick the bones at their camp-fires. In fact, they laughed at them and spit upon them, regarding them as no better than old women, whose tongues were the only weapons they could use. They had whipped them once, and would make wolves' meat of them very quickly, if they could get at them. They admitted that their enemies, taking a mean advantage of them, had shut them up in a trap; but there was never a trap so strong that the Comanches, who were the great warriors of the plains, could

not break through it. As for shooting, that was a game at which both sides could play, and he defied the cowardly white men and the Delaware dogs to begin it. If one Comanche should be struck by a bullet from above, the knife of the speaker would be buried in the heart of the white prisoner. He knew well enough that the water was bad, and that it would make his people sick to drink it; but the Comanches were men; they had been used to traveling over the Staked Plain, and had made long journeys without water. He had no doubt that his people would find a way to get out and take the scalps of their enemies, before they should begin to be troubled by the lack of water. How did the white men suppose the captive maiden would like the water.

In conclusion he hurled some more hard names at his enemies, and wound up his remarks with insulting gestures.

"That settles the matter fur awhile," said Markhead. "The talk is over, and now we must wait and let the trap do its work. I've a notion, Harry, that you had better speak to the gal—you or the old man—and tell her not to taste that water. It's wuss fur her to drink it, you know, than to go without."

As Captain Harwell remained silent, Harry Lee undertook to carry out Markhead's suggestion.

Ida had watched the proceedings of the Comanches with interest; but had been unable to appreciate their bewilderment or to understand their actions. During the conference she did not recognize the young Delaware, and could only guess at what was going on. But when Harry rose and spoke to her, she knew him at once, and a glad smile lighted up her face. Her father noticed this look and growled his disapproval.

Harry cautioned her concerning the water of the spring, and she nodded her head as if she comprehended his meaning. He would have said more; but some of the Comanches raised their rifles, and he dropped down behind the rock.

Ida was greatly cheered by what she had seen and heard. She had believed that Harry had been killed or captured, and had borne her captivity in silent sorrow. She would have submitted to death without a murmur, as she was hopeless

but she now knew that her lover was alive and unscathed; she knew that friends were near, who would do all in their power to rescue her from the savages, and hope and resolution revived in her breast.

As nothing more could be done at that time, and as they had not eaten since the previous day, Markhead climbed down into the defile, with Captain Harwell and the Delaware, leaving Harry Lee to watch the Comanches.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE TRAP HELD.

It is needless to recount the incidents of the next few days, and a sketch of what transpired will be sufficient for the reader.

The Comanches, after exhausting every endeavor to escape from their captivity, at last despaired of success, and settled themselves down to endure their lot as patiently as they could. But their patience was not inexhaustible, their obstinacy could not last forever, their stoicism must ultimately break down. Like a lot of wild animals that have been newly caged, they paced restlessly about their prison, consuming themselves in vain efforts to break through the solid walls of rock, and wearing out their hearts in wild longings for freedom.

Although they had boasted of their ability to endure thirst, many of them drank the water of the spring, and drank it frequently. It was necessary for them to do something, and, as there was nothing else for them to do, they felt themselves obliged to eat and drink. They had enough dried meat to last them a week or more; but they did not husband their supply, and it must soon be exhausted. Those who drank the water were compelled to drink more. The result was, that they were afflicted with burning pains in the stomach, accompanied by nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and constant feverish thirst. This tended to save their meat, though greatly at the expense of their physical condition.

Some of the Comanches had a little good water, in can

teens and leathern bags, when they entered the snug hiding-place which proved to be their prison-house. Contrary to Markhead's prophecy, they did not give it all to their captive, nor did they divide it with her. Captain Harwell's forebodings turned out to be correct. Perceiving that it was the design of their enemies to starve them out, and knowing that they could endure privation much longer than Ida possibly could, they determined that she should suffer with the rest, hoping that their jailors would let them go free, rather than that she should perish before their eyes.

The lack of water soon began to tell upon Ida. Obedient to Harry Lee's caution, she did not take the water of the spring, and consequently did not suffer from feverish thirst and the other symptoms which tormented those who drank it. But she had all her life been accustomed to plenty of every thing, and she soon began to feel, quite sensibly, the lack of the necessary element.

Her famishing condition was apparent to the watchers above, who held a consultation upon the subject in the hidden lodge. At this consultation it appeared that the Comanches had omitted Swiftwing from their calculations.

Captain Harwell opened his mouth upon this occasion, and gave utterance to curses loud and long and deep. He inveighed bitterly against the plan that had been adopted to bring the Comanches to terms, although he had admitted his inability to suggest any other. It had turned out, he said, exactly as he had told them; his daughter might better be killed at once, than to perish slowly of thirst. She would perish, and they would only have the satisfaction of slaughtering the Comanches at their leisure.

"The thing hain't worked out as I 'lowed it would, and that's a fact," replied Markhead. "Those Comanches are mad, about as mad, I reckon, as any set of red-skins that ever lived, and thar's no tellin' what amount of meanness they *will* do when they are right down mad. As the game looks now, they hold the best keards, and I'm powerful afeard that we're bound to lose. Ef it wasn't for the gal, what a fust-class Comanche graveyard we mought start down in that hollow."

"Don't talk like a fool!" thundered Harwell. "The girl is thar', and it's her we want."

"Jest so, and that makes me say that the reds hold the keards on us. They know that we must give in when the gal gives out, and they mean to use her ag'in' us. The upshot of it will be, I'm afeard, that we will hev' to let the reds out of thar', and let them kerry the gal off with 'em. Ef she could only hold water, while those durned skunks are erishin' with thust—ah!"

Here Swiftwing came to them, bringing a leather sack and a long coil of twisted bark, which she gave to Markhead. His eyes glittered, as if he guessed what she meant.

"What am I to do with this?" he asked, holding up the sack.

"Fill it with water," replied the girl; "and let it down to the white maiden."

"But the Comanches will see it, and will take it away from her."

"Let it down at night."

"She'll be asleep, somewhar, away from the rock, and won't know nothin' about it."

"Tell her that you mean to let it down, so that she may be ready to take it and hide it."

"That would be a powerful good notion, gal, ef thar' was any way of tellin' her without tellin' the Comanches. Among sech a crowd of 'em, thar's prob'ly half a dozen that onderstand our lingo, more or less, and they'd be sure to ketch the run of the talk."

Swiftwing looked puzzled, as if this view of the subject had not occurred to her.

"I can do it!" exclaimed Harry Lee, starting up. "Come with me, Markhead, and I will tell her what we mean to do."

Markhead followed the young man, and both ascended the cliff to their place of outlook, where Harry, protecting himself behind a rock, hailed Ida, was answered by her, and conversed with her for some minutes in a language that was strange to his companion.

"It is all right now," he said, when he had finished his explanation.

"What did you tell her?"

"I told her that she must lie down to-night near the cliff,

away from the red-skins, so that we can let some water down to her when the Comanches have gone to sleep. She understood me; she said she knew where she could hide the water, and she pointed out the spot that she would occupy to-night."

"That'll do, I reckon. What sort of lingo was that you talked in?"

"French."

"I thought I had heerd suthin' like it among the Kanucks up yonder whar the snow comes from; but I reckon you don't speak it as they do. It seems to me that the game is in our hands ag'in. That red-skin gal gave us the winnin' keard, and you knew how to play it, and it must be our own fault if we lose now."

The Comanches had listened eagerly to the conversation between Harry Lee and Ida; but had not been able to understand a word that was said. They observed her carefully, as she brightened up under Harry's cheering words, but could not divine, from her actions, what it was that had been talked about. Indignant that such plotting should be going on between their enemies and their captive, they tried to get a shot at Harry, but in this, also, were unsuccessful.

Markhead and Harry returned to their comrades, to acquaint them with what had been done, and Swiftwing's "winning card" was played that night. Harry, who had carefully marked the spot which Ida expected to occupy, placed himself directly over it, and let down the sack of water until it touched the bottom of the hollow. Then he drew it up a little now and then, as a fisherman draws up his hook, until he perceived that the "bait" was taken; the cord was loosed from the sack, and he hauled it up to the top of the cliff, convinced that Ida had secured her precious supply of water.

The next day showed that he had not been mistaken. There was such a change in Ida, that no one who looked at her could fail to notice it. The Comanches observed it, and wondered at it; but, with all their acuteness, they were unable to discover what it was that had produced the change in her demeanor. With her woman's wit, sharpened by necessity, she had chosen such an excellent place of concealment

for her sack of water, that the most prying eyes could not penetrate it. She was obliged to use great caution in going to it, to prevent discovery, and seldom tasted the water, except at night, when most of the savages were asleep, and her movements were covered by darkness.

She thus became comparatively bright, cheerful and hearty, while the physical condition of the Comanches hourly grew worse. They were sure that she had some secret supply of the life-giving fluid of which they were deprived. This excited their wrath, and consequently increased their fever, and added to their sufferings. On the fourth day some of them were so sick and exhausted, that they seemed to be incapable of motion, and it was evident to the watchers above that all were feeling, in a greater or less degree, the tortures of thirst.

"If this goes on a few days longer," said Markhead; "we mought whip that hull crowd of reds in a fist-and-skull fight."

The old sachem of the Delawares, contrary to Swiftwing's anticipations, grew better, instead of worse. Harry Lee happened to have about him some powders, which he had procured in the "settlements" when he was sick of a fever, and he persuaded Swiftwing to administer them to the old man. The effect was good; his fever left him, and he was again calm and placid; but his age was so great, and his system was so nearly worn out, that he could not be expected to survive much longer.

Nen-ne-pah, who had listened to his ravings as if they were the utterances of inspiration, was no less attentive to his quieter and more rational conversation. It may have been that, like civilized lovers, he wished to be "on the right side of the old man." It may have been that his listening gave him more of the company of Swiftwing, the greater part of whose time was passed in attendance on her grandfather. It is certain that he reverentially assented to every thing that was said by Wingenund, although he knew well that the old man's plans and ideas were purely visionary, and that the scattered remnant of Delawares could never again become a people. It is also certain that he neglected no opportunity of pressing his suit with Swiftwing.

She was by no means averse to his attentions, and Nen-nepah was sure that she regarded him favorably ; but she would not assure him that she returned his love, and made no definite reply to his importunities.

"Wingenund still lives," she said. "Swiftwing belongs to Wingenund. He has no one but her, and while he lives she must think of no one else."

CHAPTER VII.

SOMETHING HAPPENS.

"YOU'RE lovin' that gal of the old man's powerful strong, I reckon," said Markhead, as he and Harry Lee walked up the defile, to see how the Comanches were enduring their trap.

"I do love her, Mark. ; I could hardly tell how much, and I am not going to try. I love her so well, that I mean to make her my wife, if we ever get her out of the hands of the Comanches."

"But the old man means that you shan't do it."

"He does seem to have his head set against me pretty strongly ; but he may change. In fact, it will be necessary for him to do so."

"Seems you've got a head of your own too. Is the gal willin' ?"

"I think so."

"That's more'n one p'int in the game. I wonder what the old man has ag'inst you."

"That is what I would like to know. I wanted to ask him, when he drove me away from the camp ; but he would not allow me to speak."

"He is hyar now, and kain't git away. You had better bone him."

"Bone him ?"

"Ax him what his objectshins are, and make him tell you."

"It is a rather bad time to speak to him, when he is so sore about the loss of his daughter, and when it is doubtful whether we can get her away from the Comanches alive."

"Jest the right time, 'cordin' to my notion."

"Well, I will try it. I will speak to him as soon as I get an opportunity."

When they had mounted the cliff, they soon came to the conclusion that the Comanches could not much longer endure their confinement and thirst. They presented a haggard, emaciated and exhausted appearance, while Ida Harwell, who had used with great economy the contents of her water-sack, appeared to be fresh, cheerful, and in good physical condition.

"I would like to know jest now," said Markhead, "what sort of a temper they're in. Hyar comes the old man, and I reckon he will give 'em a talkin' to."

It was not in the nature of Captain Harwell to await with patience the process of exhaustion under which the Comanches were gradually and surely sinking. Even after Ida, supplied with water by Swiftwing's thoughtfulness, and cheerful in the belief that her friends were endeavoring to assist her, had so greatly improved in health and spirits, he was still moody, impatient and always ready to prophesy the worst.

He saw before him, every day, a number of his deadly enemies, whom he hated with an intensity of hatred, cooped up in a narrow place, from which there was no possibility of escape. It would be "as easy as rolling off a log" to shoot them down at his leisure, and he would have been delighted to slaughter them thus, if he had not known that the first shot would have been the death-warrant of his daughter. They were at his mercy, and he, through Ida, was at their mercy. They were "so near and yet so far," that the contemplation of them was terribly tantalizing to him. The consequence was that he daily became crosser and more morose, and had not a civil word for any of his companions.

When he came upon the cliff, where Markhead and Harry Lee were watching the savages below, he was in one of his worst moods, and Harry Lee was not at all inclined to speak to him. Markhead, who was not in love with the old man's daughter, and who was never known to hold any man in awe, had no scruples about telling him what he ought to do.

"Seems those critters are nearly ready to gin out," said the trapper. "They look to be e'ena'most used up."

"P'r'aps so," growled Captain Harwell. "I've noticed that they have been lookin' mighty hard at the girl. Next thing happens, they'll be wantin' to kill her."

"They ain't any sech durned fools, Cap'n. They know well enough, ef they should kill the gal, that we would make 'em wolf's meat of the last one of 'em, and they kain't afford to give fifty-eight lives fur one. They're nearly ready to gin in, I tell you, and now's the time to talk to 'em and offer 'em terms."

Captain Harwell, after a little grumbling, consented to make the effort, and hailed the Comanches in their own language, with which he was pretty well acquainted.

In substance he repeated the terms which had been previously refused by the Indians, offering to let them go free if they would give up the girl. They must surely perish with thirst, he told them, if they should remain much longer shut up in the hollow, and they ought to feel very grateful to the white men for their clemency, in forgiving the attack upon the train, and letting them loose with their lives, solely on condition of surrendering their captive.

Greatly to his surprise, and still more to the surprise of his two companions, the savages rejected the terms in the most contemptuous manner.

The white men were fools, they said, cowards and old women, who sought to conquer their enemies by looking at them, without daring to meet them in battle. The Comanches laughed at such antagonists, despised them and defied them. They would perish to the last man, sooner than give up their prisoner under compulsion. If they must perish, the white men might be sure that she would not be the last to die.

"What in the 'nation do the 'tarnal critturs mean?" exclaimed Markhead. "It sartainly kain't be that they will die down thar in a heap, jest to spite us. I never heerd of sech an obstinate set of hard-headed fools."

"It is impossible that they should mean what they say," replied Harry. "It is only a desperate bid for better terms. They think, if they defy us now, and make us believe that they are reckless of their lives, that we will be easier on them."

"Don't see how we could be much easier. Look at the old man. He's mad all over."

Captain Harwell's face was purple with passion, and his burly form trembled in every part, under the influence of his terrible indignation. But he controlled himself with a great effort, and again spoke to the Indians, in tones that were wonderfully calm and deliberate.

He showed them the folly of their determination, telling them that they were at the mercy of the white men, and that he knew they would not be so crazy as to waste the lives of fifty-eight of their warriors, for the sake of one useless girl.

After a little more parley, the Comanches lowered their tone, and began to debate the terms of surrender. They demanded that a supply of good water should first be given them, then the entrance to the hollow should be unclosed, and they would march out, leaving Ida in the hollow.

These terms were inadmissible, and they were so informed. Captain Harwell demanded on his part, that she should first be sent out, for which purpose the passage would be partially opened. Then the stones would all be rolled away, the white men would withdraw, and the Indians might pass out and go whither they chose.

This offer did not suit the Comanches at all, and they changed their demand. They asked that they should be permitted to go direct to the sweet water, taking with them the girl, whom they would leave near the head of the river.

Captain Harwell refused to trust to their honesty, and insisted on his former demand. The Comanches were equally obstinate in insisting on the acceptance of one or the other of their propositions, and there seemed to be no probability that the debate would terminate in an amicable arrangement.

"A man with half an eye could see what they're up to now," said Markhead to Harry. "What with goin' without water, and drinkin' that sickenin' stuff, they're mighty near used up, and they're afeard, ef they should go out in that fix, that we mought pitch into 'em and whip 'em, though the odds in numbers are so big. A good drink of water, now, would put new life into 'em, and they want to make a sure thing of gittin' it, afore they give us a chance at 'em."

"They want the water first, whatever they do, and they mean to keep possession of Ida until they get it. If we could only trust them to give her up then, I would be glad to let them go."

"But you kain't trust them, any more'n you could trust a rattler not to bite when you take your foot off his neck. Wonder what the old man is sayin' to 'em now. He seems to be powerful spiteful."

Captain Harwell's passion, indeed, had become too violent to be controlled any longer, and he had commenced a tirade of abuse against the savages, denouncing, cursing and threatening them with great volubility, and in the most emphatic terms.

The Comanches, however, were masters of the art of black-guardism, and, as they were better acquainted with their own language than the captain could possibly be, they paid him back in his own coin with interest. To the most contemptuous and opprobrious epithets, they added such extremely insulting gestures, that the old man's wrath was raised considerably above the boiling point. He went back to first principles, and cursed them in the strongest and "p'isonest" frontier English.

There were several of the Indians who understood the Captain's words better than he understood the Comanche dialect, and they hurled back his epithets as rapidly as he sent them, and the game was still unequal.

A chief, who did the most of the talking—the same with whom Nen-ne-pah had communicated directly after the trap was sprung—then made a speech, and in the course of his remarks frequently pointed at Ida, who was seated near where he stood. At this Captain Harwell became more and more excited, and moved nearer to the edge of the cliff.

At last the chief, still speaking, stepped toward Ida, and put his hand on her shoulder.

This was too much for the patience of the old man, who hastily turned, and reached for his rifle. A piece of rock gave way under him, and he slipped over the cliff.

Markhead and Harry rushed forward, but were too late to save him, and a shot from below warned them that they must move back and get into cover.

At the place where the old man fell, the cliff was slightly

sloping and rough, for about a third of the distance to the bottom, and he slid down on his side pretty rapidly, catching wildly and vainly at some of the dwarf bushes and at points of rock, until he reached a little ledge that terminated the slope.

Here he caught, holding with one hand, half his body off the slope, dangling over the precipice, with nothing but the rough bottom of the hollow beneath.

He was still on his side, exhausting himself in fruitless efforts to turn and clutch the crag with his right hand. It was evident, from the awkwardness of his position and the strain on his left hand, that he could hold on but a few minutes longer.

Some of the Comanches raised their guns; but the chief restrained them. It is a waste of labor to throw sticks at nuts that are ready to fall.

The old man was ready to fall. He uttered a despairing yell as he lost hold, and fell down, down—right down on the head and shoulders of an unlucky Comanche, who, utterly regardless of the attraction of gravitation, was standing, with wide open eyes and gaping mouth, directly under the expected victim at whom he was stupidly staring.

Ida, who had covered her eyes with her hands when her father slipped over the edge of the cliff, shrieked, and fell down in a faint.

The unlucky Comanche, whose neck and back broke Captain Harwell's fall, did not rise again; but the old man, though he was breathless for a few minutes, had no hurts but the scratches and bruises he received while sliding down the slope. He would have scrambled to his feet; but the Indians were upon him, and his hands were tied before he could think of resistance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRAP BROKEN.

"It's all up now," said Markhead, as Captain Harwell was led away by the Comanches.

Harry Lee looked gloomy, and said nothing.

"If the old man had been killed," continued the trapper, "we mought hev stood it better'n this; but the game's about played now. Them niggers hold right bower and ace, and we may as well give in. What do you think about it?"

"I think I will go and bring John Hawk and the Indian girl up here. Something will happen pretty soon, and the heads and hands of all of us may be needed."

"You're right, boy. The reds will play their keards right soon now, and we'll hev to call 'em or pass out. John Hawk hes got a good head, and that Delawar' gal is nobody's fool."

Harry went down into the defile, and soon returned with Nen-ne-pah, the other Delaware, and Swiftwing. The girl brought a rifle, and clambered up the cliff as easily as her companions.

The Comanches, in the mean time, had brought forward Captain Harwell and his daughter, and had hailed Markhead, who, pretending not to understand them, did not reply until his friends arrived.

Nen-ne-pah then answered the hail, and the Comanche chief made a brief speech, to the effect that the entrance to the hollow must be at once opened, or they would kill the prisoners in their hands.

The Delaware replied as he was instructed to do, assuring them that such an act on their part would be suicidal, as the death of the prisoners would be followed by the slaughter of their entire band. They were at the mercy of the white people, who asked only the release of their friends.

The Comanche then threw off the mask, and admitted that his people were ready to die of thirst, and that they must have

relief in some way. White men, he said, were such liars, that no confidence could be placed in any thing they said. He knew well that the Comanches, if they should give up their prisoners and trust to the promises of the white men, would pay the penalty of their folly with their lives. It would be better for them to be shot down than to die of thirst, and they would at least have the satisfaction of taking two of their enemies' scalps, before they could be sent to the spirit-land. In conclusion he repeated his declaration, that the passage must at once be opened, or they would kill the prisoners.

Nen-ne-pah reported the substance of this speech to his companions, who held a consultation. Captain Harwell and Ida had taken no part in the colloquy. The former, though he had understood the greater part of what had been said, made no suggestion, but stood near Ida, silent, gloomy, too angry for utterance.

"Ef those critters war in our place," said Markhead, "this hyar matter would be fixed up mighty quick. Ef fifty-odd white men war shet up down thar', and they hed two Comanches in thar hands, the reds would jest laugh at sech threats as they're makin' now. The way they would tuck our ha'r under thar belts would be a caution to wild-cats."

"You don't mean to hint," replied Harry, "that we ought to act in that style, and give up our friends for the sake of killing the Comanches."

"In course not. I was on'y speakin' of the difference atween us and those durned skunks."

"They seem to have a very bad opinion of us."

"Yaas. The white men say that the reds are all liars, and the reds say that the whites are all liars, and I rayther reckon that neither side is far wrong. They've both seen the wust of each other. But these Comanches don't mean to give us a chance to swindle 'em—that's plain enough."

"We must make a bargain of some kind with them."

"Yaas, and we must make it 'cordin' to thar notion."

Nen-ne-pah and Swiftwing gave their opinions, and the former was instructed to reopen communications with the enemy.

A parley ensued, in the course of which it was decided that the entrance to the hollow should be opened. The white

men and the Delawares were then to retire from the defile, and the Comanches were to march out with their prisoners. The Comanches were to go unmolested to the head of the river, to procure a supply of water. At that place they would leave Captain Harwell and Ida, and would ascend to the plain and go their own way into their own country. This was substantially the same proposition that had been made to Captain Harwell.

"It's a tol'able hard bargain, Harry," said Markhead; "but I reckon it's the best we could do."

"Why do you call it hard? For my part, I am not so anxious to kill those wretches. We only want our friends, and they are to be given up to us."

"Yaas; but I'd a heap ruther that thing was done, than goin' to be done. Thar' may be liars among us white folks. I know the Comanches are liars. Let 'em once git thar fill of good water, and I'm afeard they'll forgit thar promises. But I don't see as we kin do any better 'n to let 'em out."

"Come, Mark.; we will gain nothing by borrowing trouble. Let us do what we agreed to do, and if they cheat us, then—"

There was a wild determination in the young man's eye, and a kindred flash in Swiftwing's glance, as she looked up at him.

"If they do cheat us, boy, what then?" inquired Markhead.

"Then Comanche scalps will be cheap in the market. But I don't want to speak of such a thing. Come, Mark.; let us go and roll away those rocks."

The labor of rolling away the rocks was found to be any thing but easy. Some of them required the utmost efforts of Markhead and Harry and the two Delawares to move them from their places, and the question continually recurred—how were they ever put there? This was a problem that none of the laborers could solve, and Harry Lee confessed himself unable even to guess at it. Nen-ne-pah gave some hints of his experience in seeking Swiftwing among those defiles, and it was his opinion, with which the other Delaware and Markhead partly coincided, that the entrance to the hollow had been blocked up by the spirits of dead Delawares, great men of the time when Lenni Lenape were a powerful nation.

While this work was in progress, it was considered proper to keep a watch upon their enemies, to guard against treachery and one generally guarded the opening that was made, while the others worked ; but the Comanches were quiet, and offered no interruption to the labor. Bad as their condition was, nearly perished with thirst, filled with a wild and unutterable longing for water, they kept together at the side of the hollow opposite the entrance, and were apparently as stolid and indifferent as if they had not the least interest in the work that was being done to deliver them from that terrible prison. Perhaps they believed that the workers, at the least sign of treachery, were able and willing to shut them up again ; perhaps they wished to lull to sleep the suspicions of their enemies, with the intention of accomplishing a deeper and more detestable deed of treachery.

When the workers had rolled away rocks enough to enable the Comanches to slip through the opening, they retired down the defile, still keeping a look backward to guard against treachery, and entered Wingenund's hidden lodge. Harry and Markhead took their position at the selenite window, near Swiftwing, who was already there.

Even to men who were anxiously waiting and watching, it seemed that a very short time elapsed before the Comanches came down the defile. Those seemingly stolid savages, who had stood like red statues, leaning against the wall of their prison, had kept their keen eyes open, and had been wide awake to every movement of those who were laboring at the entrance. When the work was stopped, and their enemies went away, they knew it at once, and knew that the route was clear for their departure. But even then they restrained their almost frantic desire to rush out and quench their thirst. Calmly, and with no appearance of haste, they collected their effects, leisurely they moved toward the entrance, and slowly they forced their way through, until all were clear of that den which had been to them such a dismal place of captivity.

It was not until the last man was out, and until scouts had examined the defile and reported that none of their enemies were visible, that these natives of the plains manifested their true nature. Hastily they formed their order of march, and set off in single file, on a quick walk, which became almost a

trot by the time they reached the hidden lodge. A great change was visible in their countenances, as well as in their actions. Having dropped the veil of indifference which they had worn before their enemies, their haggard countenances, their wan cheeks, their parched lips, their eager, craving gaze, showed that they were ravenous, nearly frantic, for the element which had been so long denied to them.

Notwithstanding the eagerness with which they now hurried on, they did not omit to use proper precautions concerning their captives. They knew that they were weak, exhausted, nearly famished with thirst, in such a condition that a few bold and strong men, with the advantage of position, might possibly destroy them all, and they felt themselves obliged to rely upon their captives to preserve them from such a possibility. Captain Harwell and his daughter, therefore, were placed in the middle of the line, and behind each walked one of the best warriors, with his tomahawk in his hand, ready to dash out the brains of the victim before him, at the first intimation of an attack.

This spectacle excited intense indignation in the breasts of those who watched the wild procession through the window of the hidden lodge. All were startled when the Comanches appeared, although their appearance had been momentarily expected. It seemed so strange, to be so near their enemies, to see them so plainly that the very twitching of their nerves could be distinguished, and still to be unseen by them, that all involuntarily drew back when the painted demons came in sight. Swiftwing, who had made the window, and Harry Lee, to whom the nature of the selenite was known as a scientific fact, were as badly startled as Markhead and Nen-ne-pah.

As Ida Harwell passed the window, her countenance showing the agony which she had undergone and was still undergoing, and a wild-eyed warrior striding behind her with uplifted tomahawk, Markhead seized Harry Lee's arm in his stout grasp, fearing that the young man, who was trembling with passion, might break forth in some desperate manner, and endanger the safety of all.

Not a word was spoken until the last Comanche had passed the window.

"Hard, wasn't it?" said Markhead, as Harry looked up and drew a long breath.

"Hard! It cuts like a knife! Mark., I want to get out of here. I can hardly breathe. Those red scoundrels are worn out. I could knock them down right and left. They are so famished for water, that they could scarcely lift their hands to defend themselves. We might have had that stone ready to roll away, and we might have rushed out as they passed. We could easily have whipped them and rescued Ida and her father. It is not too late now. Let us follow them, and strike in before they get to water."

"Don't talk like that, Harry, or I shall be afraid you are goin' crazy. Did you see that painted varmint who walked behind Miss Ida?"

"Yes. I—saw—that."

"With his tomahawk raised, ready to strike? When you said strike just now, it made me shiver. It's possible that we mought hev whipped that hull b'ilin' of red-skins, though I reckon none but desp'rate men would undertake the job. S'pose we hadn't done it—we'd hev ruined our friends in hyar, without helpin' our friends out thar. S'pose we had—it would hev been a long job at the best, and what would they be doin' all the while? Fust thing to happen would be two tomahawks onto the heads of the old man and Miss Ida. Don't you see that the varmints were ready fur jest sech a rush as you talked of makin'?"

"Yes, Mark.; it was plain enough; but that was a hard thing to bear, and I was a little wild."

"You know, too, that ten to one is tol'able tough odds, no matter who you're fightin'? All we kin do, boy, is to keep quiet, and settle down, and wait till the time comes that was sot, and then we kin go up to the head of the river and look arter our friends."

CHAPTER IX.

"THEM HOSSES."

WHEN the appointed hour for the delivery of the prisoners had arrived, as nearly as it could be guessed at, Harry Lee and Markhead left the hidden lodge, accompanied by the two Delaware men.

The place designated by the Comanches was about two miles up the river, where the water, being above the gypsum formation, was palatable and refreshing. It was getting dark, down in that deep gorge, when the appointed spot was reached by the four men, who had moved cautiously all the way, to make sure of not falling into an ambush. They found none of the dangers which they might have apprehended. They also found no one at the rendezvous.

It could hardly be said that they were surprised at this; but they were bewildered and troubled. Although they knew the faithless character of their enemies, all had nourished a hope, which they would hardly have admitted to themselves, that the Comanches might, this once, fulfill their promise. Slight as this hope was, the disappointment was bitter and painful.

Harry Lee and Markhead looked at each other sorrowfully, and the latter vented his indignation in some savage catharsis.

"Maybe so Comanches gone further up," suggested Nen-ne-pah.

It was possible, though there was really no reason, incompatible with intended treachery, for changing the place of meeting. The water was colder and better at the spring, Harry said, as if the famished savages would have regarded the coldness of the water. Nevertheless, there was a possibility that they might have gone further up, and the party concluded, mainly because they could think of nothing else to do, to follow their supposed trail.

It was about a mile from where they were to the head of the river, and the entire distance was so obstructed by masses

of rock, that the passage was by no means an easy one. They clambered over the piles of rock, and reached the head of the gorge, where the gigantic cliffs approached each other until they met at the top, and a spring burst out from the cavern beneath.

There was no one at the spring. Markhead and Nen-ne-pah carefully examined the locality for "sign," and declared that no one had been there. The Comanches had deceived them, had given them the slip, and had gone off with their prisoners. They could only retrace their steps, and they did so, slowly and sadly.

When they had returned to the place which had been appointed for the meeting, an examination showed that the Comanches had been there; but it was impossible to follow their trail over the rocks, so as to tell whither they had gone.

"It is night," said Markhead. "In a few minutes it will be as black down hyar as the inside of my rifle bar'l. We kain't do nothin' more till mornin'."

"Plenty dark down here; maybe so not so dark up yonder," suggested Nen-ne-pah. "S'pose Nen-ne-pah go look for Comanches,"

This proposal was accepted, and the young Delaware clambered up the cliff like a mountain goat. The others seated themselves on the stones to await his return, speaking little, occupied with their own sorrowful thoughts. When he returned the gorge was as dark as Markhead had said it would be, and his features could not be distinguished; but it was evident that he was puzzled, and he proceeded to puzzle his companions.

He had found the Comanches. They were camped on the plain, near the ravine by which he and Harry Lee had escaped. Captain Harwell and his daughter were among them bound and guarded. Nen-ne-pah sought and found a place where he could be protected from shot, and where he could easily retreat if it should be necessary to do so. He then hailed the Comanches, brought the chief to a parley, and inquired why they had broken the promise which they had made to the white men.

The chief replied, very mildly, that the white men and the Delaware dogs were liars and thieves, that they had

stolen the horses of the Comanches, who could not move without them. The Comanches intended to retain possession of the white prisoners until their horses should be delivered to them.

The Delaware, who was greatly astonished at this charge, declared that the white men had not stolen the horses, and knew nothing about them; but the Comanche indignantly repeated his previous assertions, and Nen-ne-pah had nothing to do but to return to his friends and report what he had seen and heard.

Harry Lee and his companions stared at each other, as well as they could in the darkness, in great surprise.

"I never once thought about thar hosses," said Markhead. "In coose they must hev' had hosses. They wouldn't be Comanches without hosses. I know they had hosses when they struck the train. Didn't they hev' 'em when you saw 'em, Harry?"

"They were certainly all mounted when Hawk and I met them, and they got our horses."

"We all know that they had hosses, and now I want to know what's become of them hosses."

"What's the use of talking about the horses? The painted rascals have only made an excuse for not doing what they promised to do."

"Precious little they'd keer about makin' excuses. They don't stand on ceremony, and you know it. Let's think over this matter, and try to git at the rights of it. They had hosses—that's settled. They kim down hyar, it's likely, to git out of the way of the sogers, and they hid thar hosses somewhar' afore they went into that holler. Ef the hosses warn't missin' the Comanches would hev' 'em in camp, or would hev' been off afore this. It's my opinion that they hid 'em down hyar near the river somewhar'. They sent to look arter 'em, and found 'em missin'. Then they suspected us of takin' 'em, and tuck the old man and Miss Ida up yonder, to hev' a sure thing on gittin' the critturs back. Now, Harry, in fact, don't you know any thar' about them hosses?"

"Of course I do not."

"Nor you, John Hawk?"

"No."

"Thar' ain't no call, as I see, fur any of us to be holdin' back what we mought happen to know, and I must allow that I'm in a primmendary. I'd give a purty to know what has r'ally become of them hosses."

"S'pose we ax Swiftwing," suggested Nen-ne-pah.

"You're right, John Hawk. Thar's no tellin' what that gal has done or mought do. Let's go back and talk to her."

This was agreed to, and the party groped their way in the darkness, down the river and up the narrow defile, to the hidden lodge of old Wingenund. Swiftwing, who let them into the cavern, asked no questions, and manifested no curiosity to learn how their mission had sped.

Harry Lee, who had been appointed spokesman, gave an account of the expedition, including the refusal of the Comanches to give up their prisoners, and the grounds upon which they based their refusal. He concluded by asking her, point blank, if she know what had become of the Comanches' horses.

"The horses are safe," replied Swiftwing, who had listened to the narrative without much appearance of interest.

"Safe? What do you mean by safe?"

"Safe from the Comanches."

"There is something very strange about this matter. I can not even guess by whom, or by what means, those horses have been taken away—no more than I could guess how the entrance to that hollow was blocked up. But one thing is certain—who ever has done this has done us a great injury."

"How are you injured?"

"The Comanches agreed to give up our friends; but they discovered that their horses were gone, and they naturally supposed that we had taken them. They then refused to deliver our friends to us, until we deliver their horses to them. If they had not lost their horses, the business would have been settled."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Swiftwing, smiling as if this statement amused her.

As Harry was by no means sure, he could not answer that he was sure.

"You all know," she continued, "that the Comanches are

liars, and that they would not keep their promise. Before this, if they had their horses, they would have been far away, carrying with them the old man and the white maiden. But a Comanche can not move without his horse. He can neither travel nor hunt on foot. If they have no horses, they think that they can never reach their own country, and that they will starve. You have another chance to bargain with them for your friends; but you must take care that they do not cheat you again."

"The gal is right!" exclaimed Markhead. "Her noddle is thock full of good sense, and she ain't afeard to use it. A Comanche is jest no man at all without his hoss. Take away his hoss, and he'll do any thin' possible to git it back. Ef them hosses are whar' the painted varmints kain't find 'em, they'll be keen to give up our folks for 'em. But, as the gal says, we must be precious keerful not to let 'em swindle us ag'in."

"Where are the horses?" asked Harry.

"They are safe," replied Swiftwing, with another smile. "If you can make such a bargain as will bring your friends back to you, you will soon enough find the horses."

It was agreed that communication should be opened with the Comanches as soon as possible, and all laid down to seek the rest they needed.

CHAPTER X.

MORE BARGAINING.

EARLY in the morning Harry Lee aroused his friends, and the men hastened to the river. Leaving Markhead below with Buck Welch and one of the Delawares, Harry and Nen-pah ascended the cliff, and 'interviewed' the Indians on the plain.

The interview was unsatisfactory on both sides. Obligated to conduct the conversation from a safe distance and through the medium of an interpreter, Harry could not agree, threaten or entreat as he might have wished to. He told the Coman-

ches that the white men, although they had not stolen the horses, had not concealed them, and had not had any thing to do with them, knew where they were to be found, and would deliver them to their owners, provided the Comanches would first give up the prisoners in their hands.

His statements only increased the anger of the Comanches, who did not believe a word he said. Although they had undoubtedly contemplated carrying off the prisoners, without in the least regarding their plighted word, they were none the less angry with the white men on account of the trick which they supposed had been played upon them. To this piece of rascality the white men added the enormity of lying, and the Comanches were not slow to declare that they would not stand any such nonsense.

If the white men had not stolen their horses, asked the chief, by whom had they been stolen? He knew that there was no other people thereabout to commit the theft, and he was bound to believe that the tongues of the white men were crooked—in fact, they were lying like dogs.

Harry knew no more than the Comanche who had abducted the horses. He was sure that Swiftwing had been somehow concerned in the matter; but he did not wish to speak of her in that connection, nor had he any intention of telling the Comanches another improbable story. Consequently, he only adhered to his former statement, and repeated it.

“The white man is laughing at us,” replied the chief. “Does he take us for children? Does he believe us to be fools? There was no one but himself and his people to take the horses; yet he says he has not taken them. He knows where they are to be found, and can bring them forward whenever he chooses to; yet he says that he did not take them. We can listen no longer to the lies of a boy. Our horses have been taken and hid from us, and we will keep the prisoners until our property is given up to us.”

There was a wide difference between the parties to the conference. Harry demanded that the prisoners should be given up before the delivery of the horses. The chief demanded that the horses should be given up before the delivery of the prisoners. Neither was inclined to alter his demands, and at last another meeting was decided upon.

It was agreed that five Comanches should meet the three white men and the two Delawares, at a place named by the Comanches. The Comanches were to bring their prisoners, and the white men were to deliver the horses. Neither party was to be armed, and the main body of the Comanches were not to approach within gun-shot of the appointed place. The time was to be just before the setting of the sun. Harry endeavored to have an earlier hour fixed upon ; but his antagonists were inflexible on this point.

As Harry went back to rejoin his friends, he could not help thinking that he had been forced into a hard bargain, though he did not see how he could have made any better terms. He feared that the Comanches meant mischief, and considered it highly probable that they would be able to carry out their intentions.

When he told his companions the particulars of the conference, he was inclined to blame Swiftwing for the part she had taken in concealing the horses ; but Markhead declared that she had acted right.

"It's jest as the gal told us," said the trapper. "The red varmints would hev' gone off with Miss Ida and the old man, and that would have been the last of 'em. But they kain't move 'thout thar hosses ; so they must stay hyar and give us another chance. It's a tol'able hard chance, I allow ; but it's a chance."

"For my part," replied Harry, "I can't think what we are to do. The Comanches have the advantage of us in every way, and I am afraid that we will get nothing out of them but revenge."

"Don't be downhearted, boy. This hyar game ain't out till it's played out. The keards are runnin' ag'inst us jest now ; but it may be our deal afore long. All we've got to do is to do our best, and not holler afore we're licked. I think, as you do, that those skunks mean mischief, and it stands us in hand to git a notion of what kind of mischief it is. S'pose we go up and take a look at that place whar they want us to come to. Do you know it, John Hawk?"

Nen-ne-pah knew the place, and conducted his companions to it. It was on the plain, about half a mile below the camp of the Comanches, and a hundred yards from the edge of the

cliff. It was one of the wild and wonderful spots with which the region abounded.

A deep ravine set back from the river gorge, gradually rising until it terminated at the level of the plain. Half-way up, where the ravine was more than a hundred feet in depth and about the same in width, a natural bridge stretched from side to side. The top of the bridge, some twenty feet wide, was level like the surrounding plain, and a few dwarf trees grew upon it.

Below, a hole had been cut by the action of the water that made the ravine, leaving a wide span for the bridge, and fully fifty feet between the center of the rude arch and the bottom of the ravine. The ravine was obstructed by great masses of rock, and its rough sides, seamed with hollows and tributary defiles, had been worn by the great channel-diggers, Water and Time, into a thousand wild and fantastic shapes.

With considerable difficulty the party ascended the ravine, and reached the top of the bridge, the place which had been appointed for the treaty meeting with the Comanches. Here they seated themselves, and surveyed the strange scene at their leisure.

"It's a queer place," said Markhead, when he had completed his examination; "but it ain't the only queer place in these parts. Did you say you had seen it afore, John Hawk?"

"Nen-ne-pah has seen it."

"It's a queer place; but I don't see that thar's a powerful heap of harm into it. Ef those red-skins do mean mischief, it ain't by any means clear to me how they mean to carry it out."

"They surely mean treachery of some kind," said Harry. "Why else should they be so anxious to fix upon sunset as ~~the~~ ^{the} hour of meeting?"

"In coorse, ef they meant to do what's fa'r and open, they'd be willin' to meet us in fa'r and open day. They mean mischief and we must know what kind of mischief they mean. As they ain't likely to tell us, we must guess it as well as we kin. In the fust place, the varmints must hev' losses afore they git away from hyar. As fur goin' to thar ~~own~~ ^{own} ~~hows~~ ^{hows} afore, that's the last thing they will think of.

Thar's no red-skins about hyar to steal hosses from, 'ceptin' the Witchetaws, and they're too fur off. They mean to git thar hosses afore they leave."

"Scalps, too," suggested Nen-ne-pah.

"Precisely. It ain't the natur' of the animile to want to leave these five scalps on top of our five heads. But I kain't see how they mean to git scalps or hosses, onless they're willin' to do the fa'r thing. The main body of 'em, Harry says, are to keep out of gunshot. Then thar'll be five of 'em to meet us five, and they kain't expect to git scalps off of us, as we'll sartinly be as well armed as they are, and we're more'n a match fur 'em, man to man."

"Armed!" exclaimed Harry. "What do you mean?"

"You ain't a greeny, boy, and you know well enough that the skunks will be armed. They won't bring their guns or any thing to show; but they'll be fixed, and we'll be fixed too. The odds won't be ag'inst us on that p'int, and they kain't calkilate on scalps, as fur as I see. Maybe they think we'll be fools enough to bring the hosses up hyar, whar' they kin git a sight at em.

"Don't you mean to bring the horses to this place?"

"I rayther reckon we don't. Not ef this child has got any thin' to say in the business. Let's see, fust, ef they bring our folks to us. We've put the game in thar hands once too often a'ready. It ain't anyways plain to me what devilment they *do* mean, onless—thar's good hidin'-places down yonder, John Hawk, and it's easy climbin' up on the side. What do you think?"

"Plenty chance to hide."

"*That's* what we've got to watch, and we must keep our eyes wide open, sartin. I wish thar' was more of us, and wo mought find a hidin'-place, too. Let's go to the lodge, boys, and git some grub. This child feels powerful like chawin' a chunk of b'ar-meat.

The party retraced their steps down the ravine, carefully noting its peculiarities as they went, and returned to the hidden lodge, where they found Swiftwing seated with Wing-nund. The old man's fever had entirely left him, and he seemed to be slowly, silently and painlessly sinking into the grave.

Swiftwing was anxious to learn what had transpired during the morning, and all the events were faithfully narrated to her. She had already shown such quickness of wit, and had rendered such good service in emergencies, that all felt the need of her counsel and assistance. She was particular in inquiring concerning the exact spot at which the exchanges were to be made, and in forced the opinion of Markhead, that they should go armed to the place of meeting, and that the horses should still be kept out of sight.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE BRIDGE.

WHEN the men had finished eating, Swiftwing left the cavern, and did not return until late in the evening. It was then nearly time to set out to meet the Comanches, and all were ready to go. In accordance with the instructions of Markhead, they concealed their knives under their hunting-shirts, and Nen-ne-pah and the other Delaware carried their tomahawks concealed. Harry Lee and Buck Welch each possessed a pistol, which articles were easily carried out of sight.

They did not venture to ascend the ravine to the place of rendezvous, fearing that an ambush might be laid for them, but climbed the cliff at another place. Once on the plain, where they could see for miles in every direction, they considered themselves safe, and went forward boldly to the bridge. It yet lacked half an hour of sunset; but they had wished to be early on the ground.

Early as they were, the enemies were before them. Near the middle of the bridge were seated five Comanches—stout, sinewy, fierce-looking fellows, evidently “the pick” of the band. Behind them was Captain Harwell, his arms and legs securely bound. Harry Lee looked eagerly for Ida; but she was not visible.

“They’ve got some plot ag’inst us, sure,” said Markhead, as they neared the bridge, “or they wouldn’t hev’ been so keen

to git ahead of us. The skunks hain't brought Miss Ida, and that looks bad."

"You are right," replied Harry. "I think there will be bloodshed before we get off of that bridge."

As far as appearances went, the Comanches had come for the purpose of peaceably concluding a treaty. The closest scrutiny could not discover any weapons among them, and the main body of the band was visible, fairly out of gun shot.

The five Comanches rose as their enemies came on the bridge, and all remained standing during the interview that ensued.

Nen-ne-pah took upon himself the office of spokesman and interpreter, prompted by Harry Lee and Markhead. One of the warriors replied to him, the others remaining silent.

"Why did not the chief come with you?" asked Nen-ne-pah.

"Our chief is a great brave," contemptuously replied the Comanche. "Is there any great man here, that he should come to meet him?"

"The sun has not yet set. How is it that the Comanches are here so early?"

"The chief appointed a late hour, because he knew that the white men and their red dogs would need time to bring up the horses of the Comanches. They have had plenty of time; but I do not see the horses. We have come early, because we were anxious to see our horses. Where are they?"

"The horses are near at hand. The chief promised to send both the prisoners; but you have brought only one."

To this the Comanche did not deign to reply.

"We are ready to show you where your horses are," continued the interpreter, "as soon as you give up our friends to us. You promised to bring both the prisoners to his place."

"It is a lie," coolly replied the Comanche.

This was the first insult, and it made the blood of the white men boil in their veins; but they forbore to notice it. They knew that the Comanches must feel that the advantage was on their side, or they would not dare to use such language.

“What are we to do?” asked Nen-ne-pah. “We can not trade for one prisoner. You must bring both.”

“Let the white men bring the horses. We brought the other prisoner; but we saw that the horses were not with the white men, and we sent her back.”

“He lies!” exclaimed Captain Harwell. “The rascally nigger lies! She hasn’t stirred from the camp.”

The Comanche spokesman turned angrily upon the old man, as if to strike him, but reconsidered his purpose, and gave no further heed to the interruption. He felt so sure of winning the game, that it did not trouble him to be detected in cheating.

“If we talk in this style,” said Harry Lee, “it will soon be dark, and nothing will be done. I know well enough that you understand what I say, and I will speak plainly to you.”

Markhead laid his hand on the young man’s arm, and whispered to him.

“Be careful,” he said. “Don’t make ’em mad, and don’t let ’em provoke you. That ’ud be jest what they want, and they’re achin’ fur our scalps.”

Harry promised to be careful, and spoke to the Comanche in his calmest tones.

“It is true,” he said, “that you promised to bring both prisoners, and you must bring the other before we can bargain with you. You can not expect that we will give up the horses and trust to your honor to release our friends. We trusted you once, and we were deceived.”

“We did not know at that time that you had stolen our horses,” replied the Comanche.

“We have not taken your horses. We have found out where they are, and can put you in possession of them, on they were neither stolen nor concealed by us.”

“Big Ax has not come here to talk to a boy or to listen to childish tales. If there is a man among you who can talk sense, Big Ax will listen to him.”

“You must listen to what I say, and you will learn that I am no child. I warn you, if you harm one of those white people who are in your hands, the warriors of the great white chief will darken your land, and the plains will be watered with Comanche blood.”

"Who is your great white chief?" sneeringly replied the warrior. "He would never dare to enter the Comanche country. His warriors would soon be rubbed out, if they should meet the Comanches. But this is a very poor talk. We want our horses. If you do not give them to us, we will go and take them. The Comanches can find them, and when they take the horses they will take your scalps to hang on their bridles."

Markhead drew Harry back, and whispered to him again.

"I'm sure I saw an Injin's head down yonder in the gully and thar's more of 'em thar'. Keep your eyes peeled, don't go near the edge, and have your knife handy. Somebody's goin' to make a p'int in this game right soon."

Harry nodded, and turned to the Comanche again.

As Markhead suggested, the scene was approaching a crisis, and the purpose of the savages must soon be developed. The sun had set, and twilight had succeeded to day. The Comanche who acted as spokesman cast his eyes restlessly about, frequently glancing down into the ravine, and the others held their right hands under their blankets, as if ready to use their concealed weapons. Their antagonists were not behind them at this game, and both sides stood thus at bay, surveying each other with looks of hatred, and waiting, like hounds in the leash, to be let loose upon their prey. Physically and on foot, the white men and the Delawares were more than a match for the picked Comanches, and the victory must fall to them, in the event of a contest, unless their adversaries had devised some stratagem that would give them the advantage.

"You seek to make us afraid of you," said Harry; "but we know that your words are nothing but wind. You agreed to come to this place without arms; but you carry weapons under your blankets. You may lie to us; but you can not deceive us, and you can not frighten us. I will tell you what we are willing to do, and we have no other offer to make. Send to the camp for the other prisoner. Bring her here, and we will take you to the horses. You may then go away on your horses, and we will keep our friends. Nothing can be done until you bring the other prisoner."

"We will give you the old man for the horses," replied

the Comanche, "but we will not give you the white maiden. Our chief says that she is a nice squaw, and he means to keep her."

Harry was wild with anger, and would have sprung upon the Comanche, had he not been restrained by Markhead, who stepped forward and spoke:

"Do you think you've got a set of fools to deal with, you cowardly red riptyle? I see a gun bar'l shinin' down yonder, and I know you've fixed up a trick to git our scalps; but we will rub you out before we go under."

The Indian started back, and uttered his war-cry; but Markhead's knife, plunged to his heart, at once put an end to his career and his cry.

Harry Lee and Buck Welch were ready, and their pistols cracked at the instant. Knives and tomahawks flashed in the air, and a combat to the death was begun.

The mine that had been prepared by the Indians was sprung as soon as the war-cry sounded. A number of dark forms showed themselves in the ravine, darting out from the hollows and from behind the rocks. Sending a volley of bullets and arrows at the bridge, they swarmed up the cliff, to take part in the conflict.

Then ensued a scene which had not entered into the calculations of the Comanches, and for which they were not prepared.

From a hollow in the other side of the ravine came a dozen flashes, followed by the sharp reports of as many rifles, and several of those who were climbing up the cliff fell back upon the rocks below. The others, though they were badly frightened, continued the ascent; but only one of them reached the top, as the rifles in the ravine were quickly re-loaded, and picked them off as they climbed.

The fight on the bridge was finished in far less time than would be necessary to describe it. Three of the Comanches fell at once before Markhead's knife and the pistols of Lee and Welch. The remaining two, seeing that their friends below were unexpectedly attacked, were seized with a panic, and turned to fly, but were pursued and cut down. Harry Lee, in the mean time, had cut the bonds of Captain Harwell, and assisted the old man to his feet.

One of the Comanches from below reached the top of the bridge, and stood a moment there, bewildered by the sight that met his eyes. He would have fled to his friends, who were advancing across the plain, but Nen-ne-pah confronted him in that direction, and he had no chance but to sell his life as dearly as possible. Dropping his rifle and tomahawk, he rushed at the Delaware, and seized him in a death-grapple.

Nen-ne-pah, who had not expected the attack, was forced back to the edge of the bridge before he could collect his energies to meet the assault. He would have been pushed over into the ravine, if he had not grasped a small tree, forcing his antagonist to partly break his hold.

Both clinched, without attempting to use their knives, each striving to throw his antagonist over the brink.

Their twistings and writhings were such, that the Delaware's friends were unable to interfere to assist him, as it was impossible to tell which of the combatants a blow might strike. They could only stand near, waiting for an opportunity to use their weapons. The stunted sapling, upon which both relied to save them from going over the brink, seemed about to be torn up by the roots, in which event both would be dashed upon the rocks below.

As the Delaware, by a great effort, forced his antagonist to the lower side of the tree, and as the roots, under the strain of this last wrench, were nearly torn from the scanty earth on top of the bridge, the sharp crack of a rifle was heard, the Comanche loosed his hold, and fell, without a cry, dead into the ravine.

All looked in the direction from which the shot had proceeded, and saw Swiftwing standing at the eastern end of the bridge. A Smoking rifle was in her hand, and she was beckoning them to follow her.

It was high time for them to be getting away from that place. The scenes that have been described had transpired in the course of a few minutes. The Comanches, who had been just out of gun-shot, had started toward the bridge as soon as the first shot was fired, and were now near at hand, shooting and yelling as they came. As their bullets were falling unpleasantly near the bridge, there was no time to be lost in beating a retreat, and all hastened to follow Swiftwing.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PHANTOM WARRIORS

SWIFTWING waited until her friends reached her, and then led the way near the edge of the cliff. She was fleet-footed, and could easily outrun the Comanches, who were not accustomed to that style of locomotion. Her friends were equally swift of foot; but it was soon discovered that there was a serious obstacle to their rapid progress.

Captain Harwell's legs had been bound so tightly and for so long a time, that he was hardly able to use them, and hobbled along like a man with the rheumatism. As he was clearly unable to move faster, Harry Lee told his companions to go on and leave him to his fate, as he intended to stay by the old man.

Swiftwing looked back, saw the condition of affairs, and told him to have no fear, but to push on a little further, as they would soon be out of danger.

Harry could not guess how or where she expected to find a place of safety, as the river gorge made a bend a short distance ahead of them, and it seemed that they were going into a *cul de sac*, in which they must inevitably fall a prey to their enemies. But he had great confidence in the resources of the Indian girl's mind, and he urged Captain Harwell onward, not fearing that they would be extricated from their dangerous predicament.

The Comanches, believing that the fugitives were getting into a position from which escape would be impossible, pressed forward with renewed vigor, and spread themselves out to cut off all chance of retreat.

Swiftwing ran but a little further after speaking to Harry Lee, and then suddenly disappeared. Nen-ne-pah, who was nearest to her, next went out of sight, and the others followed his example as they came up. Harry Lee, who came last, bringing up Captain Harwell, saw that they had jumped down into a hole, near the gorge, and told Captain Harwell that he

must go in. With a grunt and an imprecation, the old man did as he was bid, and struck the bottom with a thud. Harry then jumped in, and found a passage at the bottom of the hole, in which his friends were collected.

The passage was one of many with which the cliffs were honeycombed, made by the same process that had formed the gorge, and was irregular in shape and direction. After passing into it from the hole, Harry came to a sort of chamber in which the whole party could stand erect. It was quite dark; but Swiftwing had brought a torch, which was lighted, and they were enabled to see quite distinctly.

"Those devils of red-skins will follow us," grumbled Captain Harwell, "and I swear that I can't stir another step until I rest."

"We will shoot them," replied Swiftwing. "If we shoot one, I think that will be plenty."

The Comanches came running and whooping on the trail of the fugitives, and stopped at the mouth of the hole, confident that their game was now "treed." Swiftwing motioned to Nen-ne-pah, who dropped on one knee, and leveled his rifle.

After a few minutes' jabbering, one of the Comanches dropped down into the hole, the Delaware's rifle cracked, and the Comanche uttered his death-cry as his feet struck the rock. Another had jumped in directly after him, and the rifle of Buck Welch put an end to any further explorations on his part.

Marxhead took the torch, and stepped back to make an exploration, and reported that the corpse blocked up the opening so that no further attempt at pursuit need be feared.

"But I don't see how we are goin' to git out of this den," he said. "Ef we stay in hyar until those niggers conclude to go away, I reckon we'll hev' a long spell of stayin'."

Swiftwing settled the question by taking the trail and bidding her companions to follow her.

After traversing the passage a little distance, they came to its termination, in the side of the river gorge. The cliff at this place overhung the opening, so that it was not visible from above, and, as night had now come on, it was quite dark. The girl pointed out a sort of path down to the river, where

they could descend, even in the darkness, by looking well to their footsteps.

While the savages were still yelling and whooping and running about above them, they began the descent, having first extinguished the torch. Captain Harwell, who had rubbed his legs until the circulation was restored, was preceded by Markhead and followed by Harry Lee, who assisted him at the worst places, and thus all made the descent in safety.

Having reached the bottom of the gorge, they crossed the river, and went direct to the hidden lodge, where their first care was to satisfy their hunger.

When they had eaten, they lighted their pipes, and discussed the occurrences of the evening. Harry Lee and Captain Harwell were inclined to be silent and meditative; but Markhead was quite voluble.

"Those sneakin' varmints made thar trap jest as I 'lowed they would," he said. "Thar' was sech a good chance to hide, that they couldn't miss it. But we'd hev' been rubbed out, spite of all calkilations, ef it hadn't been fur——"

He looked meaningly at Swiftwing, who made no reply, and did not seem to notice the allusion.

"Wal, she don't seem to want to talk about it; but I know who we've got to thank fur that job, and this child don't mind sayin' that he feels grateful. But I'd give consid'able to find out how 'twas done. Did you notice, Harry, how many shots were fired at the Comanches from down thar' in the gully?"

"No. I was too busy to count them."

"I tried to count 'em, and I make out that thar' must hev' been a dozen rifles down thar'. Ef they war mortal rifles with mortal powder and bullets in 'em, nnd mortal hands a holdin' of 'em, I'd like to know whar' they come from, and who fotched 'em thar'."

"I believe that Swiftwing knows something about it. If she does not choose to tell us, we must remain in ignorance."

"Thar's witchcraft about it, some way or another. It ain't possible that thar's any livin' men among these rocks, 'ceptin ourselves and the Comanches. And yet, I never heard of spooks shootin' guns. It's the queerest piece of business I ever lighted down onto."

The cry of a night-bird arose on the air, and Swiftwing looked up quickly.

"Come with me," she said, as she stepped to the entrance of the cavern, "and I will show you those who fired the shots."

She sallied forth into the darkness, followed by Markhead and Harry Lee and Nen-ne-pah, and walked rapidly down the defile, until she came to the river gorge.

"We will stop here," she said, and uttered the cry of night bird, similar to that which they had heard in the cave.

In a few moments she pointed across the river, and her friends saw and counted a dozen Indians, slowly defiling before them, down the other side of the gorge. These Indians were tall, erect and stately, differing in form and in apparel from the Indians of the plains. Slowly and silently they moved down the gorge, each with a rifle in his hand, and the moonlight that fell upon them from above gave them a weird and ghost-like appearance.

Not a word was spoken until they had all passed the mouth of the ravine, and had gone out of sight down the river. Then Markhead, always ready to hear himself talk, gave vent to his surprise at this strange apparition.

"Who in thunder are those?" he asked. "They ain't Comanches, sartin. They're spooks, jest as I thought."

"I have seen them before," said Nen-ne-pah, referring to his account of his adventures in those wilds.

"They are not Comanches," added Harry, "There are no Indians in these parts. If Swiftwing does not choose to enlighten us, we can do nothing but wonder. Whoever or whatever they are, they have done us a great service, and I am very thankful."

Swiftwing made no reply to any of these remarks, but led the way back to the hidden lodge, where Markhead described what he had seen, for the benefit of Captain Harwell and the others, concluding his description with a statement of his belief in the supernatural character of the tall warriors.

"That's as it may be," grunted Captain Harwell. "I don't believe in any sech nonsense, myself, though I did once think that I saw the ghost of a b'ar. If the ghosts, or whatever

they may be, would git my girl away from those cussed Comanches, I might give 'em credit for bein' of some use."

"You shall see them to-morrow," said Swiftwing, "and to-morrow night you shall see what they can do."

With this assurance all were obliged to be content, and the remainder of the night was passed in sleep. Harry Lee, especially, although he did not believe that there was any thing supernatural connected with the recent occurrences, was so confident of Swiftwing's ability to do what she undertook to do, that he rested remarkably well until morning.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NIGHT BATTLE.

IN the morning Swiftwing left the hidden lodge, after requesting her friends to wait for her there. When she returned, she astonished them by bringing with her twelve warriors, who silently followed her into the cabin and stationed themselves around Wingenund's couch. These warriors were tall and sinewy in appearance, grave and stern in demeanor, and were evidently brave and determined men, although some of them seemed to be too old for the war-path.

The old sachem's eyes kindled as he looked at them, and he sat up and addressed them.

"Warriors, listen to me! It may be that I will never speak to you again, and my words must sink into your hearts. You are the last of a great people, the only true children of the Lenni Lenape that are left to me. I had hoped that on this side of the Father of Waters I might collect my scattered children and build up the great nation again. My hope has been disappointed, and the dream is ended. The proud Delawares have become hirelings to the white men, and are no longer a people. You alone have proved faithful to the traditions of your fathers and the teachings of your sachem. The blessing of Wingenund will be with you, and you will

meet him in the happy hunting-grounds, where the white men can never put out your fires and drive off the game.

"Warriors, you are again about to go upon the war path. Those lying snakes, the Comanches, have invaded your secret retreats, and they must be punished. You had better aid the white men than league with robbers and murderers. Conduct yourselves like men, and let the scalps of your enemies prove that you have done your duty. My spirit will still lead you, although my body can not be with you. Warriors, farewell! You may never again listen to the words of Wingenund."

Profoundly affected, in spite of the stoicism on which they prided themselves, the warriors bid farewell to the old sachem and left the cavern as silently as they had entered it.

When they were gone, Swiftwing was besieged with questions by her friends, who wished to know the meaning of this scene and what enterprise was proposed to be undertaken.

"You have heard who those warriors are," she said. "They are the only followers that are left to Wingenund but they are true to him and to the traditions of their race. It was they who helped us to preserve the secret of our dwelling-place, when we were sought by friends as well as by enemies. It was they who rolled together the rocks, and blocked up the Comanches when they hid in the deep hollow. It was they whose rifles saved you from the treachery of the Comanches at the bridge. They will now go on the war-path against the Comanches, and will take from them the white maiden, the daughter of this old man."

"But how is this to be done?" asked Harry Lee.

Swiftwing explained that the Comanches were encamped on the plain, just at the edge of the ravine down which Harry and Nen-ne-pah had escaped from them. She proposed to go up the ravine at night, with Harry and Nen-ne-pah, and conceal herself as near as possible to the camp of the Comanches. The other white man, with the remaining Delaware and Wingenund's twelve warriors, would mount the horses that had been taken from the Comanches, ascend the plain, and make a circuit that would bring them close to their enemies. At the darkest hour of night they would make

a sudden attack upon the camp, which would throw the Comanches into such confusion that Swiftwing might have an opportunity to snatch the prisoner from them and escape with her down the ravine.

This plan was regarded as feasible by Captain Harwell and his friends, who proceeded to arrange the details by which it was to be carried into execution. As the Comanches were unaccustomed to fight on foot, it was believed that a night attack by mounted men would do great damage among them before they could recover from the disorder that would inevitably be produced. By the time they would be able to rally, the dash would be over, and their assailants would be out of harm's reach.

At dark Swiftwing again led the way down the defile to the river gorge. Then she went down the river a mile or more, and finally turned off to the left at an opening in the cliff, which might easily have been passed without notice, but which proved to be large enough to permit the entrance of a horse.

This opening wound into the bluff a considerable distance, and terminated in a hollow similar to that in which the Comanches had been trapped, but of much greater extent. There were trees in the hollow, with plenty of grass, and a small stream running through it at one side. A few lodges were visible, built in the style of the forest Indians, and Wingenund's warriors were engaged in catching and bridling a number of horses, while others were grazing in the high grass.

Besides the horses of the Comanches, Harry and Nen-nopah gladly recognized their own, which they had been compelled to abandon, and several were discovered which had been stampeded at the time of the attack upon the train. It was explained that the Comanches, when they took refuge in the gorge from the expected pursuit of the soldiers, had left all the horses in a glen, from which they had been removed by the Delawares, under the direction of Swiftwing, and had been so carefully concealed that their owners were unable to find them.

The Delaware, with Captain Harwell, Markhead and Buck Welch, selected such horses as suited them, and led them out into the gorge, where they mounted and set off down the

river, leaving Swiftwing, with Harry Lee and Nen-ne-pah, to retrace their steps up the gorge.

We will follow the mounted party.

Slowly and silently they proceeded down the river, until they reached a place where the bluff could be ascended. After experiencing some difficulty in forcing their horses up the ascent, they reached the plain, and took a westerly course toward the encampment of the Comanches.

It was quite dark when they approached the ravine that was so well remembered by Harry Lee and Nen-ne-pah, and they made a wide circuit around it, until they came in front of the Comanche camping ground, where they concealed themselves behind a knoll, to wait for the hour at which the blow was to be struck.

The expedition had been conducted with all possible silence and secrecy, under the leadership of one of the oldest and most skillful of the Delawares. When the party reached its station, this warrior set out alone, leaving his horse with his companions, to reconnoiter the position of the enemy. In the course of an hour he returned, and reported that he had carefully observed the position and number of the Comanches. He had also passed around their camp, and had descended into the ravine, where he had communicated with Swiftwing and her two friends, who were ready to perform their part in the drama. He then proceeded to make his arrangements for the attack.

As the Comanches still largely outnumbered their opponents, and as their camp was well located, with sentinels properly posted, it was not expected that they could be surprised completely, or that an easy victory could be obtained over them. It was necessary, therefore, to get as near to them as possible before they should discover the presence of their enemies, in order that they should have little time for preparation. Then the terror to be inspired by a mounted attack was to be relied upon, as well as the suddenness of the blow.

It lacked an hour of moonrise when the Delawares and their white allies marched forward toward the Comanche camp, each man leading his horse, so as to keep, as long as possible, below the range of the Comanches' vision. The

night was as yet very dark, the plain was rolling, and they cautiously concealed themselves as they advanced behind the inequalities of its surface. Thus they had approached quite near to the Comanche camp, when a sharp yell told that they were discovered.

Instantly every man leaped upon his horse, the war-cry was sounded, and they dashed at full speed upon the Comanche camp.

The Comanches, on their part, hastily seized their weapons, and bravely defended themselves against the attack; but this movement had not entered into their calculations, and they were taken at a great disadvantage. After discharging their rifles the assailants used their tomahawks and battle-axes, laying about them vigorously as they swept like a whirlwind through the camp. On all sides the Comanches fell or retreated before them, and were thrown into such disorder that the course of the attacking party was unchecked.

According to previous arrangement this should have been the end of the affair, a dash through the camp, to divert the attentions of the Comanches from the operations that were to be conducted in their rear, being all that was contemplated by the night attack. The Delaware leader, therefore, when he had passed through the camp, gave the signal to retreat, and his comrades had drawn together to follow him, when they were obliged to return to the assistance of their white allies.

Captain Harwell, who had been very quiet and reserved since his release from the Comanches, changed from the lamb to the tiger as soon as he found himself armed and in the midst of his enemies. In fact, he was as crazy as Markhead had described him to be directly after the attack upon his train. He raged like a wild beast furious for blood, forcing his horse wherever the Comanches were thickest, striking them down on the right and on the left, and accompanying his hard blows with still harder oaths.

The Comanches, however, soon recovered from the confusion into which they had been thrown by the attack, and, perceiving how few their assailants were, rushed upon them for revenge. The signal for a retreat had been given by the Delaware leader just at the right moment; but Captain Harwell

either not hearing it, or determined not to obey it, remained in the midst of the Comanches, dealing out his blows and deaths as liberally as before.

He soon discovered that he had stirred up a hornet's nest, and that, when he was willing to retreat, he was unable to extricate himself from his assailants. Markhead and Welch, who rushed to his rescue, found themselves involved in the same difficulty. The Delawares, unwilling to leave their allies in the lurch, returned to their assistance, and the combat commenced again, with the advantage now on the side of the Comanches.

Captain Harwell was struck from his horse, and a desperate fight ensued over his body. Buck Welch was slain at his side, and Markhead alone, standing over the old man, and using his clubbed rifle with fearful effect, kept the savages from securing the scalps of the fallen. The Delawares, for their part, had as much as they could do to defend themselves, and the yells of triumph of the Comanches were heard above all other noises of the battle.

At this juncture a wild, piercing and unearthly yell was heard, that caused a sudden cessation of the strife. All looked in the direction from which it proceeded, and saw, in the light of the newly-risen moon, a tall and withered old warrior, with long white hair and ghost-like countenance, flourishing a shining battle-ax, and urging forward a large white horse at a tremendous pace.

The Delawares knew the rider; it was their old sachem, and the unearthly yell was the war-cry of Wingenund; but to the Comanches he was a spirit from another world. They had heard many supernatural tales of that wild region, and this appearance confirmed them all.

The truth was that Wingenund, crazed by fever, with the wild energy of temporary strength that fever often brings, had risen from his couch, had found and mounted his old war-horse, and had hastened to take part in the conflict. As he came upon the scene, with the death-look upon his face, and the fires of insanity blazing in his eyes, it was no wonder that the Comanches believed him to be an unearthly visitant.

He dashed through them where they were thickest, uttering his shrill and weird war-cry, and they fell away from him in

terror, tumbling over each other in their blind efforts to escape from the awful apparition. No blow did he strike with his shining battle-ax, nor did he pause a moment in his wild career, but urged the white horse forward until he reached the edge of the cliff, and his cry was shriller and yet more unearthly as horse and rider went over the precipice together.

The Delawares, appalled as they were by the sudden appearance and disappearance of their old chief, did not lose their presence of mind. A horse was caught, Captain Harwell was assisted to mount, the wounded and dead were also placed upon horses, and all were galloping away before the Comanches could recover their fright.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RESCUE.

WHEN Swiftwing set out with her two friends, to take her station in the ravine behind the Comanche camp, Nen-ne-pah thought that he could give her some valuable information, and proposed to show her an easy way to the ravine; but she gave him to understand that she was well acquainted with the passage through which he had escaped from the Comanches with Harry Lee.

"The eyes of Swiftwing have been open," she said. "She has been obliged to hide among these rocks from both friends and enemies, and there is not a hole into which a wolf could crawl that she does not know."

She led the way, indeed, as if she had been accustomed to tread the path, and reached the ravine with her companions when darkness had fairly settled down upon the plain.

Their progress up the ravine was necessarily slow and cautious, as the slightest noise might bring the Comanches upon them, and cause their death or capture, as well as the ruin of their enterprise.

When they had come to the rear of the camp, she requested her companions to lie down and keep quiet, as she

wished to examine the camp and open communications with Ida Harwell. As it was a perilous undertaking, each requested to be allowed to go in her place; but she refused to permit this, and would not even allow one of them to accompany her.

Carefully she worked her way up the side of the ravine, feeling that the displacement of a stone might bring her enemies upon her. It was a difficult task at any time, and was rendered more difficult by the darkness, which was so thick in the ravine that she could hardly see the rocks she was climbing.

Once, while feeling for a foothold, she moved a loose stone from its place, and a thrill of apprehension passed through her as it rattled down. With a guttural exclamation a Comanche warrior arose, came to the edge of the ravine, and peered over to see what had caused the disturbance; but Swiftwing lay close to the side of the rock, as motionless as if she had been glued to it, and the warrior saw nothing.

Although the ravine at this place was not twenty feet deep, she was more than twenty minutes in ascending to the edge, where she raised her head and looked out upon the plain, to discover at what point she had reached the camp.

She was in the midst of the enemy. Near her, only a few yards from her head, was the warrior who had looked down into the ravine, half reclining on the ground. Beyond, by the light of a small fire, she could see the dark forms of the other Comanches, mostly lying on the ground, a few sitting or standing, with sentinels visible on the western side of the camp.

Swiftwing looked for Ida Harwell, but could not distinguish her in the darkness. If there had been women among the Comanches, she would have boldly entered the camp, and would have spoken openly to Ida. As it was, she could only hang upon the outskirts, and trust to chance and her own dexterity. She could effect nothing while she was so near to the watchful warrior, and accordingly resolved to move higher up the ravine.

This difficult movement was executed with her usual caution, and when she again raised her head above the level of the plain, she found herself near a small group, one member of which was Ida Harwell.

Ida was seated about a dozen paces from the edge of the ravine, her back against a large rock that lay upon the plain. She was unbound, and her hands were crossed upon her lap, and her head was drooped forward, as if she was revolving sad and troubled thoughts. Near her sat a warrior, wide awake and watchful, and another was stretched on the ground at her feet, and asleep.

It was no easy matter for Swiftwing to communicate with the young lady in the midst of her guards, and she was uncertain in what manner it would be best to execute her task. If Ida had been an Indian, the Delaware girl, after attracting her attention, might have conveyed her meaning in that language of signs which was universally understood among the Indians of the plains; but it was necessary to speak to her, and so to act as not to alarm or startle her.

While Swiftwing was puzzling her brain to determine what it would be best to do, the Indian who was seated near Ida was filling his pipe, and directly he started to the fire to light it. This was Swiftwing's opportunity, and she threw a pebble at Ida, hitting her on the head.

"Hist!" whispered Swiftwing, as Ida quickly looked around. and then pointed at the sleeping Indian.

Ida was sure that she was addressed by a friend, although she did not recognize in the darkness the face that had often looked down upon her from the heights above the hollow in which the Comanches had been entrapped.

"He is asleep," she replied, in a whisper. "Who are you?"

"A friend. Move a little nearer to me, if you can, as the warrior may wake."

Ida silently changed her position, without disturbing the Comanche, and signified that she was ready to listen.

"There are other friends near you," whispered Swiftwing. "To-night the Comanches will be attacked from where the sun sets, and in the noise and the darkness you may escape. I will be concealed down here. Get as near to me as you can, and keep your eyes open. Don't answer me or look this way, as the warrior is coming back from the fire."

Swiftwing disappeared as the smoker approached and gruffly asked Ida why she had moved from the place where he had left her.

She said that she had been disturbed by a snake that had run under the rock, and she took advantage of the opportunity, while he was searching for the suppositious reptile, to move a little nearer to the ravine, down the side of which Swiftwing was silently and swiftly climbing.

Hardly had the Delaware girl accomplished the descent, when she heard slight sounds further up the ravine, which were caused, as her practiced ear told her, by some one approaching from that direction. She stopped and listened. The sounds ceased, and in their place came the shrill and piercing chirp of the "bull cricket," which was often used as a night signal by Wingenund's Delawares.

She answered the signal, and directly the old warrior who had led the mounted men was at her side. A moment sufficed for explanations between the two, and the warrior returned to his party, while Swiftwing went down the ravine to meet Harry Lee and Nen-ne-pah, whom she found lying *perdu* among the rocks.

After briefly informing them of the arrangements that had been made, she led them up the ravine, near to the place where she had seen Ida. Here she directed them to conceal themselves and to have their weapons ready for instant use. She then climbed up the side of the ravine, and ensconced herself in a crevice near the edge, where she could see, as far as the darkness would permit, what was transpiring on the plain.

Patiently she waited in her place of concealment, and patiently waited Harry Lee and Nen-ne-pah below, the one rejoicing in the possibility of rescuing Ida Harwell, and the other glad to be near Swiftwing and permitted to assist her.

A faint light in the eastern sky told that the moon would shortly rise—most of the Comanches were stretched upon the ground in slumber, though the sentinels were still awake and at their posts—of the two warriors who guarded Ida, one was yet sleeping and the other was meditatively smoking his pipe—Idea was taking advantage of the slumber of the one and the occupation of the other to gradually gain a position nearer the ravine—when a yell from one of the sentries aroused and startled the camp.

The yell of the sentry was followed by one louder, wilder

and more defiant, which Swiftwing recognized as the war-cry of the Delawares, and then followed the rapid hoof-beats of the horses, the sharp reports of the rifles, and all the horrid sounds of a night attack.

The smoking warrior dropped his pipe, bestowed a vigorous kick upon the man at his feet, snatched his weapons, and hastened to take part in the melee. The man who had been sleeping started up with an exclamation of anger and astonishment, stared wildly about, and saw no one near who could have kicked him, with the exception of Ida, who had hastily stepped close to the edge of the ravine. Her seeming retreat persuaded him that she was the author of the indignity, and he rushed forward, bewildered and resentful, and seized her by the arm.

But Swiftwing, who had darted from her concealment, was on the plain and at Ida's side as soon as the warrior reached her. Before the Comanche, hardly awake as yet, could recover from his astonishment, she struck him a vengeful blow with her knife, that stretched him upon the ground.

Instantly she seized Ida's hand, drew her to the edge of the ravine, and assisted her to descend; but Ida, excited by the darkness, by the noise of the fighting, and by her recent peril, missed her footing, fell, and was caught in the arms of Harry Lee, whose loving pressure and joyful words quickly recalled her senses.

Swiftwing took her by the arm, and hastened with her down the ravine, directing Harry Lee and Nen-ne-pah to follow close behind them to guard against pursuit.

The escape was not to be accomplished without molestation. The Comanches, recovering from their panic, turned upon their foes. The warrior who had been struck by Swiftwing was merely wounded, and he hastened to give the alarm and report the escape of the prisoner. Half a dozen savages descended into the ravine, and pressed forward in pursuit; but their yells, as well as the noise they made in jumping down, put the fugitives on their guard, and Harry Lee and the Delaware turned to meet them, while Swiftwing and Ida fairly flew over the rough rocks.

The light of the moon disclosed the Comanches as they came on, and Harry's rifle cracked, dropping one in his tracks,

and stopping them for a moment. As they again came on, the Delaware fired, with the same effect, and then both ran down the ravine, after Swiftwing and Ida, who had nearly reached its termination at the gorge.

Furious with rage, the remaining Comanches rushed wildly after them, and overtook them just before they joined the two girls. Harry, who had had time to reload, dropped quickly on his knee, brought two of the pursuers in range, and fired with quick but careful aim. The foremost man fell, and the one behind him was badly wounded.

Still there were two unhurt, who dashed with uplifted tomahawks upon their two foes. After a few blows with the axes and clubbed rifles, these weapons were dropped, and all drew their knives and closed in for a death grapple.

Swiftwing, in the mean time, was assisting Ida to pass from the foot of the ravine around into the passage that led to the bottom of the gorge. It was a perilous feat at the best, and was rendered doubly so to Ida by the darkness and by the deadly combat so close to her. She was fairly frightened as she hung over the dark abyss, and it required all Swiftwing's strength of mind and body to encourage her and keep her from falling.

At this moment—when the men were about to come together for a final struggle, and when Swiftwing was helping Ida to maintain her uncertain foothold—a yell, shrill, wild and unearthly, sounded above them, and pierced the depths of the ravine.

All stood aghast. The men involuntarily lowered their knives as they faced each other, and waited for a repetition of the weird cry. Ida, as a chill of fear struck to her heart, tottered and nearly fell; but Swiftwing quickly stepped out and held her to the side of the gorge, clutching the rocks with her strong grasp, and inclosing her friend with her own arms.

Harry Lee first recovered his presence of mind, drove his knife into the heart of his frightened opponent, and knocked down the other Comanche with a blow of his fist. Nen-ne-pah aroused himself and completed the work, and then both hastened to the assistance of the girls, while again and again the wild and shrill cry pierced the night air.

They were hardly a moment too soon. The grasp of Swift

wing was nearly ready to give way, and the situation of both was perilous in the extreme. Nen-ne-pah, with the agility of a panther, climbed the cliff above them, and let himself down into the passage. With his assistance on that side, and with Harry's on the side of the ravine, the girls were safely brought into the passage. Harry followed, and all sunk on the rocky floor of the grotto to rest, as they were nearly exhausted by exertion and excitement.

Again the wild cry sounded, and the Delaware girl, shuddering, covered her face with her hands.

"What is it?" asked Harry.

"The war-cry of Wingenund," replied Swiftwing. "It is his spirit. He is dead, or soon will be dead."

Again the cry sounded, directly over their heads. It was no longer a war-cry, but a death shriek, wild and mournful, triumphant and terrible.

The next moment a dark mass came whirling down the side of the cliff, passed the mouth of the grotto, and fell, with a sickening crash, upon the rocks below.

CHAPTER XV.

A TRAIL OF BLOOD.

At least half an hour elapsed after the falling of the dark object into the gorge, before the party in the grotto were ready to move. Swiftwing instinctively knew what it was, and she uttered a shriek as it fell, fully as wild and thrilling as that which had preceded the fall. Then she sunk down upon the rocks and lay in a stupor.

Harry Lee spoke to her in a vain endeavor to rouse her from this seeming trance. Nen-ne-pah addressed to her words of loving entreaty, in the musical language of her own people; but she did not notice him even by a look. It was not until Ida, by the gentle words and soothing tenderness which only a woman can use, at last succeeded in attracting

her attention, that she raised her head, and looked wildly about upon her friends.

Then her agony found a voice.

"Did you hear it?" she asked. "Did you see it? It was Wingenund, on his great white horse. He spoke to me as he went by. He has gone to the spirit land, and he told me to follow him. I am going! Wingenund! Last sachem of the Delawares! Your daughter obeys your voice!"

She rushed to the mouth of the grotto, and would have thrown herself down into the abyss, had not Nen-ne-pah leaped before her and caught her in his arms. It required the exertion of the full strength of the young Delaware and Harry Lee to restrain her and bear her away from the dangerous vicinity. It then seemed impossible to calm her and to persuade her to speak and act like a rational being. The high-spirited girl, who had dared and endured so much, whose brain and nerve had been equal to every emergency, was now entirely unstrung, her mind wandering, and her heart thrown down into the depths of despair.

It was then that Ida, who had been the weakest of all, showed herself the strongest, exhibiting high womanly qualities which had not before been called into exercise.

"Go away for a little while," she said, "and leave her alone with me."

Harry and the Delaware obeyed, retiring out of sight of the two women. After a short time Ida came to them, leading her friend by the hand, as she had herself been led.

Swiftwing was herself again, greatly to the astonishment of the two men, who could not guess by what woman's magic the change had been effected. She spoke calmly and rationally, and led the way down the dark and difficult passage, closely followed by Ida.

When they reached the bottom of the gorge, the moon had risen so high that its rays penetrated even into that deep abyss, and the ghastly sight which all expected to see was plainly visible before them. Harry Lee would gladly have led Swiftwing away from the spot; but she persisted in her wish to view the remains of him who had been so dear to her.

Side by side lay the dead horse and his dead rider. They

were crushed almost out of all semblance of beast or man ; but the white hide of the one and the gray hairs of the other were sufficient to prove their identity.

Swiftwing gazed at the sad scene without any apparent emotion, and calmly gave her directions when she was asked what should be done.

"The warriors will soon return. If they are alive, and I believe they are, they must already have reached the river. Let Nen-ne-pah go down and wait for them. When he meets them, let him bring them here."

The young Delaware hastened to do her bidding. Swiftwing sat down near the mangled corpses of Wingenund and his white horse, and covered her face with her robe. Harry and Ida left her to herself, not only because they respected her grief, but because they had a great deal to say to each other, and there was such a good opportunity for saying it.

In less than an hour Nen-ne-pah returned, and with him came the Delaware warriors, marching slowly and solemnly, without their horses. Captain Harwell was supported between two of them, being so weak from the pain of his wounds and from the loss of blood, that he was unable to walk alone.

When Ida perceived the condition of her father, she ran to him, seated him by the side of the river, and held him in her arms, uttering words of sympathy and sorrow, but failing to win a smile from the hard old man.

Although he took no notice of her kindness, he had seen, as he came up the gorge, that she was sitting in loving proximity to Harry Lee, and he resented the attitude.

"When we git out of this, if we ever do, thar'll be no more of that," he said, with a black look at Harry. "I'll keep you safe, girl, out of the way of interlopers. Yes ; I'll keep you safe."

"I am in no danger now, father," replied Ida, willfully misunderstanding his meaning. "Think of yourself. You are badly wounded, and you must keep as quiet as possible until we can get you where you can be taken care of."

"That's nothin', girl. I'll git over that easy enough. A red-skin arrow went clear through my leg, and a red-skin tomahawk nearly smashed my head ; but I'll git over that

easy enough. I'm afeard it ain't yeur old father you're thinkin' of, girl, as much as it is that young man over yonder."

"You ought not to trouble yourself about such matters now, sir. You will only distress yourself uselessly. I have no doubt that that affair will end very well."

"Yaan. You've got your notions about it, and I've got mine. We shall see which will win. Heads I win, tails you lose—that's the game I mean to play. You'll be rich, Ida, and I don't mean to have you trapped by a good-for-nothin' trapper."

"Why, father, Harry Lee—"

"That's enough. I won't hear another word. If you know what's healthy for you, girl, you won't speak his name ag'in. What do the Delaware's mean to do now? I wish you'd go and see."

The Delaware warriors had grouped themselves about the body of their old sachem in stern and gloomy silence. They stood with bowed heads and countenances seemingly emotionless, and not a word was spoken among them until Swiftwing raised herself and asked the particulars of the fight and of Wingenund's appearance on the ground.

The old warrior who had led the party gave a circumstantial account of the occurrences of the night, and a murmur of assent from the others witnessed the truth of his narration.

"It is well," said Swiftwing, speaking as proudly as a princess. "Wingenund has died as he wished to die. He has fallen like a great chief, at the head of his people, and his spirit has gone to the happy hunting-grounds. He has long desired to go, and his only fear has been that he would lie like a wounded wolf in his den. This is no time to mourn him. Let his warriors take care of his body and of that of his white horse, and to-morrow they shall be buried together."

Silently the Delawares collected poles, and made two litters, on one of which were placed the mangled remains of the old sachem, and on the other those of his horse. With these they slowly and mournfully went down the river to their secret camp.

Captain Harwell was led away by Markhead and his own Delaware, Swiftwing and Ida walking before, and Harry Lee bringing up the rear of this procession. When they reached the hidden lodge the old man's wounds were attended to, and his own rough surgery with Swiftwing's skill and Ida's nursing, placed him in a comfortable condition of body, though his mind was ill at ease, as he was fretted into a fever by his dislike of Harry Lee and his frantic desire to take vengeance on the Comanches.

Captain Harwell was not as young as he had been, and the ease and indulgence of the later years of his life had undermined what had once been a very vigorous and hardy constitution. He had experienced worse wounds, and had suffered much greater exposure, without perceptible injury; but his day for such endurance had gone by. The night air and the dampness of the cavern, with the agitation and worry of his mind, had had a bad effect upon his wounds, and the morning after the fight he was delirious.

Ida could not leave him, if she had wished to do so, and she was desirous that Swiftwing should remain with her; but the Delaware girl had other duties that called her away.

"This day," she said, "must be devoted to mourning for Wingenund. He must be buried, and with him the white man and one of our braves who were killed by the Comanches. I must be there. My duty calls me, and my people will expect me. I am the last of the race of Wingenund. Your friends will be with you, and I will send two warriors from the secret camp."

When Swiftwing had gone, Ida administered to the old man a potion which the Delaware girl had prepared for him, and he soon sunk into a deep slumber. The two Delawares arrived, whom Swiftwing had promised to send, and talked with Markhead and Nen-ne-pah; but he slept well through it all.

Ida felt so much easier concerning him, that she took advantage of the opportunity to have a little conversation with Harry, reporting to him what her father had said to her down by the river.

"He is very strongly prejudiced against me, and I don't know why he should be," replied Harry. "He thinks that

he has the game in his own hands ; but he may be mistaken. I feel sure, Ida, that we will win in the end. For that matter, if I can take the queen, he is welcome to the rest of the game."

It was noon, and the old man was still sleeping, when a breathless Indian came hurrying into the cavern, bringing astounding intelligence.

The night attack upon the Comanches had stirred up a hornet's nest with a vengeance. The audacity of the assault, together with the rescue of their remaining captive, and the knowledge that their horses were in the possession of a band of Delawares, had raised their indignation to the highest pitch. Although they had suffered severely in the two combats with the Delawares and their white allies, they still largely outnumbered their opponents, and they resolved to hunt them down and exterminate them. They were hot for vengeance, for the recapture of their prisoner, for the recovery of their horses, and for the scalps of the Delawares.

In the morning, after burying their dead and attending to their wounded, they set out in search of their enemies. The trail over the plain was easy enough to follow, and the pass that led down into the river gorge was soon discovered. It was the same by which they had themselves gone after the attack upon Captain Harwell's train.

When they got down into the gorge, where there was nothing but rock, the trail was so blind that they were completely puzzled ; but they did not abate a jot of their resolution to find their foes and destroy them. Parties were sent up and down the river, in the hope of hitting upon the trail, with instructions to examine every nook and possible hiding-place.

The party that was sent up the river came to the place where Wingenund was killed by his fall from the bluff. Here the marks were plain enough, and it was only necessary to determine whither the body had been taken. They saw where the Delawares had crossed the river with the litter, and then perceived—what they could not previously have noticed, as they came up on the other side of the river—that the track of the Delawares was marked by drops of blood.

Following this bloody trail, it led them to the secret camp. They sent a spy in at the entrance, and he reported that their

foes were there, with the horses of the Comanches. In fact, the Delawares had just finished burying the body of Wingenund.

A courier was at once sent down the river to the other party, which came to the scene in hot haste. A reconnoissance was made, and it was determined to enter in force and "rub out" the Delawares at their leisure. Although taken by surprise and at a disadvantage, the Delawares fought bravely and desperately, and the Comanches gained their victory at the cost of several of their number killed and wounded.

The Delaware who brought the news of the disaster to the cave did not, of course, relate all these particulars. His story was brief and to the point, startling in its terrible simplicity.

"And Swiftwing is there!" exclaimed Nen-ne-pah, as he seized his rifle and rushed out of the cavern, followed by the other Delawares, leaving Markhead and Harry Lee in some uncertainty as to what they ought to do.

CHAPTER XVI.

CAPTAIN HARWELL'S WINNING CARDS.

MARKHEAD and Harry, anxious as they were to follow the Delawares to the secret camp, were deterred by the condition of Captain Harwell; but their minds were soon relieved by the action of the old man himself, who rose from his couch, without help, and stood before them with a wild, eager, savage look on his rough features.

"I heerd it all!" he exclaimed. "Don't fool with me. I'm all right. We've got those cussed Comanches fast now, and we'll rub out the last one of 'em. Give me my rifle and my powder-horn and my bullet-pouch. Whar's my knife? I want a tomahawk. Come, boys; are you ready? Be quick!"

Ida entreated him to be calm and to lie down again, and

Harry Lee endeavored to dissuade him from his evident purpose ; but he shook off the girl, and paid no attention to the man.

"Better let him go, I reckon," said Markhead. "Frettin' and foamin' here would hurt him a heap wuss'n fightin'."

"I tell you I'm well," persisted the old man. "I know what's the matter. I've had a fever ; but it's gone. I'm as cool as an iceberg, and can draw a bead as well as the best man among you. I mean to take my spite out of those Comanches, and some of you may git hurt if you try to hinder me."

After a little further discussion it was agreed that the old man should be allowed to go, and all proceeded as rapidly as possible to the secret camp, Ida carrying her father's rifle, and Markhead assisting his impatient progress.

Harry Lee had been greatly troubled concerning the fate of Swiftwing. He had no doubt that she had been massacred by the Comanches, and he burned with a desire to avenge her death.

His surprise was great when he met her at the entrance to the secret camp, her rifle in her hand, together with Nen-ne-pah and the other Delawares.

She had happened to be near the entrance when the Comanches made their attack. Instantly understanding the state of affairs, she had concealed herself. As soon as they were in, and had commenced the work of death, she quietly passed out, and stood in the passage with her rifle, resolved, if assistance should not reach her, to slay at least one of her foes before retreating.

In this position she was found by Nen-ne-pah and the other Delawares, and was consulting with them concerning the steps that should be taken to punish the Comanches, when Captain Harwell and his friends arrived.

The Comanches had completed the massacre. Not one of the Delawares in the secret camp remained alive, and even old Wingenund had been torn from his grave for the sake of his scalp. They were now collecting the horses, preparatory to departure ; but they had lost considerably in killed and wounded, and their only way of exit was blockaded by eight rifles in the hands of seven determined men and one deter

mined woman, whose advantage of position more than made up for their inferiority in numbers.

Captain Harwell, in spite of his wounds and weakness, was the most eager to meet the foe, and he at once took command of the party. He led the avengers through the passage to the secret camp, where he directed them to conceal themselves on each side of the entrance. Only one rifle was to be fired at a time, unless the Comanches should make a rush for the purpose of forcing their way out, in which event three more were to fire, and the others were to be held as a reserve.

The first intimation the Comanches had of the presence of their enemies was a shot from Captain Harwell's rifle, which brought one of their number to the ground. Looking around to discover whence the shot proceeded, they saw the smoke at the entrance.

Knowing nothing of the escape of the man who had brought the news to the cavern, they believed that they had massacred all the Delawares with the exception of Swiftwing, and that she, in a blind fury, had fired upon them. As they had not found the white men with their red allies, they could only conclude that a separation had taken place. At all events, they had not supposed that they had any thing to fear from the former.

Believing that Swiftwing was the only person to be accounted for, and that she was their assailant, a warrior was dispatched to the entrance, to capture or kill her before she could reload.

As he bounded forth on his errand, another rifle cracked, and he fell dead.

Evidently the Comanches thought that the matter was becoming serious, that there was more trouble in store for them than they had anticipated. They ceased attending to the horses, and withdrew to one side of the hollow, where they held a consultation.

Hardly was their conference finished, when another shot came from the passage, and another Comanche was struck. Suddenly and simultaneously they made a rush at the opening, hoping to surprise and overwhelm their concealed enemies.

When they were quite close, three shots were fired, with

deadly effect. With yells of rage they still rushed on, only to be met by four more shots, which completed their discomfiture, and sent them howling and limping away.

This was too much for the Comanches. They looked around for some way of escape, but found none. They were in a trap from which death alone could free them.

Captain Harwell still held his followers to the rule which he had established—that only one rifle should be fired at a time, unless the Comanches should make a rush. There was a tacit addition to this rule, which passed without objection—that the one shot at a time should be fired by himself. Leaning against a rock, which afforded him support and protection, he loaded and fired with deliberation, chuckling with great glee when his shot struck the mark. After the repulse of the Comanches in their effort to force the passage, he reloaded, and looked about for another victim to his unerring aim.

“Jest look at ’em!” he exclaimed. “Look at the sneakin’ red varmints! Reckon they’ve got about as much of it as they want. They’re huntin’ a place to git out, and they’ll have to hunt a long while afore they find it. Now they’ve divided, and they mean to sneak around the edges of the holler and try to roust us out. Watch ’em, boys, and nail ’em as they come. I’ll take the fust shot, so’s to be sure not to throw away powder and lead.”

The last attempt of the Comanches succeeded no better than their previous efforts. The deadly rifles picked them off one by one, while their assailants were concealed from their sight and protected from their shot. When nearly all were slain, the wretched remnant threw up their hands as if imploring mercy; but there was no mercy for them; the Delawares sallied out, and cut them down remorselessly.

The hollow presented the appearance of a slaughter-house. The Delawares were soon engaged in collecting the scalps of their enemies and burying the bodies of their friends. Harry Lee turned away disgusted. Ida, although she had kept near her friends, had been out of sight of the slaughter, and had only heard the yells and shrieks and groans of the victims. Swiftwing waited until Wingenund was again laid in his grave, and was then ready to leave the horrid scene.

Even Captain Harwell was satisfied. When the bloody work was finished, the excitement that had sustained him subsided and he was almost helpless. Markhead and Ida were obliged to assist him back to the hidden lodge, whither they went, accompanied by Ida and Swiftwing and Harry Lee.

The excitement and the exertion of destroying the Comanches had been too much for the old man. Fever again set in, and during two days it was doubtful whether he would live. When the fever died away, he pronounced himself quite well, though rather weak, and insisted upon immediately leaving the cañon and commencing the journey to New Mexico.

Harry Lee had little chance, during her father's illness, to converse with Ida upon matters pertaining to themselves, as she was continually at his side, and was so troubled by the probability of his dying, that she could allow no other sentiment to interfere with her duty toward him. When Captain Harwell's fever had left him, Harry was anxious to have an interview and an explanation with him; but the old man manifested such a decided repugnance to his presence, that he could not attempt to approach him.

Ida appeared to be more troubled by this state of affairs than her lover was. She feared that her father's will would separate them, and that they would never be able to come together; but Harry begged her to feel no uneasiness upon that point. They might be separated for a while, he said; but he felt confident that he would be able in time even to overcome the prejudices of Captain Harwell. Only let her be true to him, and he was sure that she would yet become his bride. Again they plighted their troth, as they had done many times before, and were as happy as they could be under the circumstances.

Swiftwing and Nen-ne-pah had no difficulty in coming to an understanding. The young Delaware was sure that the girl loved him, and it was not long before she made him fully aware of the fact. As neither of them was subject to the control of any relative, they were joined in hand, as they had already been joined in heart, after the ancient fashion of their tribe.

As soon as Captain Harwell was well enough to talk and

act, he sought to make a bargain with the remaining Delawares for their escort to New Mexico, offering to purchase the Comanche horses, and to pay them for the horses and their own services, on his arrival at Fernandez.

Swiftwing, to whom this proposition was referred by her grandfather's followers, advised them to accept it. Wing-nund was dead, she said to them. The nation which he had hoped to establish on that side of the Father of Rivers had existed only in his dreams, and now was no longer a dream. The Delawares were a small and scattered people, and it would be far better for them to serve the white men, than to become incorporated with any of the prairie tribes.

Captain Harwell and Markhead made such provision for the journey as they could, and set out as soon as the old man was able to travel, accompanied by four Delawares.

Swiftwing and Nen-ne-pah, with Harry Lee, went with them to the plains, and Harry evinced a disposition to make the trip to New Mexico; but his intention was promptly vetoed by the old man, who rode up to him, and addressed him in his severest tones.

"I want you to understand, young man, that this sort of thing is over and done with. You can't shize around my girl, no way you can fix it, and you may jest put that down as a settled fact. This hyar party is made up, and you ain't wanted along with it."

"I have no wish to intrude where I am not wanted," replied Harry. "I think, however, if I could know your objection to me, perhaps——"

"That'll do, now. Thar' ain't no perhaps about it. I won't hear another word from you. Start ahead, Mark., and let's git away from hyar. Good-by, John Hawk, and luck to you and your purty red wife!"

As the party started to ride away, Ida turned and waved her hand to Harry Lee.

"*Au revoir!* I will see you again."

"You may be sure of that," replied Harry, and sadly joined Nen-ne-pah and Swiftwing, who were about to take up their residence temporarily in the Choctaw nation.

Captain Harwell, although his escort was so small, safely reached his home in New Mexico.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE END OF THE GAME.

It is an old saying at the west that no game is out until it is played out.

Within two years after the happening of the events related in the preceding pages, there was a commercial crisis, or general monetary "knock down and drag out," in the United States, particularly in the South-western portion of the republic.

The country had been flooded with the issues of irresponsible banking institutions. Wild Cat and Red Dog had been the kings of the hour, and had flaunted their flimsy banners in the van of many thousand followers, who had gladly and madly followed them to destruction. An immense amount of worthless paper had been set afloat. Values had risen extravagantly, money in plenty was in the hands of everybody, credit was easy to be had, business was prosperous, and "all was serene," until the crash came. Then values collapsed suddenly, the abundant money proved to be as unsubstantial as fairy gold, pushing for pay harshly succeeded credit, and all was ruin and desolation.

Among those who were "caught in the snap" was Captain Harwell, who had been doing a heavy business in New Mexico during the inflation excitement. As nearly all his dealings were with "the States," the causes that produced the crisis operated upon him directly. He had undertaken new enterprises, which had absorbed his solid capital. He had bought in the east, at the prevailing prices and on time contracts, large quantities of goods for Indian trading. He had made heavy purchases of peltries, at the high rates that were then raging. He had accumulated, and had on hand, many thousands of dollars in the issues of the "free banking institutions."

When the crash came, there was "a gulf between" himself and his creditors, which he found it impossible to step over

He could neither collect nor pay. His shiplasters were worthless, and his peltries and goods would bring nothing like the prices he had paid and agreed to pay. He had in vain attempted to obtain further time from his creditors who appeared to be inexorable, and absolute ruin was at hand.

It was at this juncture that he received a letter from "the States," informing him that the junior member of a firm in Vicksburg, which was his heaviest creditor, was about to visit him, for the purpose of pressing a settlement, and might soon be expected. The letter was brief, unsympathetic, business-like, and Captain Harwell, often as he read it, could not draw a grain of comfort from it.

He was seated on the veranda of his residence, shortly after the receipt of this letter, with his daughter Ida, and was growling out his uneasiness for her benefit.

"This letter has been a long time on the way," he said, "and that chap may drop in any day. When he comes, it will be all up with this consarn, I reckon. They don't talk nothin' but pay, and they might as well try to get blood out of a turnip as pay out of me. The firm is Wager & Lee now, 'cordin' to the letter. It used to be Lee & Wager; but the old man is dead, and the young one is come in, and they've changed the name. They ortn't be hard on me, as I've done a power of business with 'em in my day; but everybody is as hard as flint these times. It'll be a tough job with me, at my time of life, to turn and grub for my livin' ag'in, and I don't know what'll become of you, my girl."

Ida did not seem to be much appalled at the prospect, as she looked toward the south, and pointed at a man who was riding up the dusty road.

"There comes a stranger, father. He may be the very man of whom you were speaking."

Ida was correct in her surmise. The stranger was young, good-looking and well-dressed. He rode a fine horse, carried a rifle at his saddle-bow, and had for his only baggage a capacious pair of saddle-bags. He rode up to the house, dismounted, walked to the veranda, and introduced himself as Mr. Lee, of the firm of Wager & Lee, Vicksburg.

"Mighty glad to see you!" exclaimed the old man. "Jest

talkin' about you this minnit. This is my daughter, Ida Harwell. Take a seat, and I'll have suthin' brought to brighten you up arter your long ride."

The stranger and Ida bowed distantly, and the former took the seat that was offered him. Captain Harwell ordered the horse to be taken care of, and set before his guest wine and brandy of the vintage of the Tacs valley.

"You say your name is Lee," remarked the old man, in the course of the conversation that ensued. "Are you a son of old Sam Lee?"

"Yes, sir. At my father's death I entered the firm, and became the junior member. You have probably noticed the change of title."

"I knowed that the old man had a son; but he allers happened to be away at school somewhar when I was thar. What mought be your full name?"

"Harry Lee."

"Harry Lee! I knowed a young chap of that name once; but he was nothin' but a trapper up in the mountings. No relation, I reckon."

"I have no relatives in the mountains."

As it was late in the evening when the stranger arrived, supper was soon announced. Pleading the fatigue of his journey, Lee asked to be shown to his room soon after supper, and retired with his capacious saddle-bags. He had not yet said a word concerning the business that brought him to Fernandez, and Captain Harwell had dreaded the subject too much to bring it up. In the morning, thought the old man, the smash will come.

In the morning Captain Harwell was out at an early hour, although he had passed a restless night. The stranger had probably slept too soundly; for he had not made his appearance when breakfast was ready, and it was necessary to call him. When the door of the dining-room was opened to admit him, there entered a man dressed in the deer-skin and homespun garb of a trapper, with knife, pistol and tomahawk at his belt.

Captain Harwell leaned back in his chair, and surveyed the apparition with intense astonishment.

"Cre-ation!" he exclaimed. "Look a-hyar, stranger.

Air you the same Harry Lee that was hyar last night, or the same Harry Lee that I once come across in the mountings?"

"Both, Captain Harwell. I was suspected of having a tendency to consumption, and physicians advised that I should quit college and 'rough it' for a while on the plains and in the mountains. I became acquainted with your daughter while she was at school in Mississippi, and afterward met her when she was about to start with you to New Mexico. I joined your party; but you turned me off, if you remember, at the edge of the Staked Plain."

"Thunderation! Why didn't you tell me who you war?"

"I tried to do so when you drove me away, and afterward when I wished to accompany you to New Mexico; but you would not suffer me to make any explanation."

"The—Old—Harry!"

Captain Harwell could not do justice to the subject, and was silent during the meal.

"And now, if you please, we will speak of our business matters," said Harry, when he had finished his breakfast.

Captain Harwell pushed back his chair, and stared fixedly at the young man, with his face as red as a beet.

"I say, Mr. Lee, have you quite give up the notion of likin' that girl of mine, and of marryin' her?"

"By no means. Ida and I settled that affair long ago. I have come here for the purpose of marrying her, at her invitation."

Ida laughed and hid her face; but the old man was deeply affected.

"Jest to think of me," he said, sobbing as he spoke. "An old man, nigh broke down—every thin' to be give up to pay my debts, and then not half paid—to turn out and work for a livin' at my age! And I've been troubled near to death with thinkin' what would come of Ida. I deserve to be took down, for my mizzable stuck up meanness."

"As for your affairs," said Harry, "you will find that they will be easily settled. The experience and caution of Mr. Wager and my father kept our house clear of the perils of these times, and we are able to assist our friends. If you will allow me to help you to wind up your business, I am confident that you will yet come out a rich man."

THE HAPPY END.

Harry's offer was gladly accepted, and his prediction was realized. When Captain Harwell's business in New Mexico was settled, he was persuaded to take up his residence in Vicksburg, and when Harry Lee returned to Mississippi, Ida accompanied him as his wife.

Harry made inquiries for Ner-re-pah, or John Hawk. Having found him, he established him in business as a trader in the Choctaw nation. Ner-ne-pah prospered and he and Swiftwing, with their children, formed one of the "first families" of 'ah-le-quah.

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